CHURCH AND SOCIETY

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES

Essays in honour of Paul Abrecht

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Essays in honour of Paul Abrecht

World Council of Churches, Geneva

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Sonnet from Bucharest

Kenneth E. Boulding

What can we do when there is no way to talk,
No way to describe what must be made plain,
No way to relieve the intolerable strain
Of shut doors, blank walls, deaf ears that balk, balk
All passage between minds? So monsters stalk
The empty, echoing corridors of the brain
And all testing collapses in a vain,
Blind, incoherent, senseless, random walk.

O quiet, quiet. Let blessed silence fill
The nightmare emptiness like a healing river
Then drink the water of life, thank the great giver,
And Joy will burst open all our doors, and spill
In torrents of light, and carry us all away
Into communion, into clear open day.

Editor's Note

We welcome Prof. Roger Shinn as guest editor of this special issue of *The Ecumenical Review* on the work of Paul Abrecht. We are deeply grateful for his willingness to devote the considerable time and energy necessary for this task.

Because of the special circumstances under which this issue appears, it seems appropriate to defer the sections "Ecumenical Chronicle", "Ecumenical Diary", "Significant Ecumenical Journals" and "Bibliographia Oecumenica". They will be resumed in the April 1985 issue.

T.W.

Preface

Roger L. Shinn

This special issue of *The Ecumenical Review* is a *Festschrift* for Paul Abrecht, honouring his memorable service on the staff of the World Council of Churches from 1948 to 1983. To many people around the world he personified the work of the WCC in the area of "Church and Society".

This project originated in the Geneva staff of the WCC. Christa Stalschus and Janos Pasztor, after consulting with others, invited the writers. Most responded enthusiastically; a very few were unable to accept within the time schedule. Ms Stalschus and Mr Pasztor, encouraged by many others, are the real initiators of the symposium, and all who are here honouring Dr Abrecht owe gratitude to them. They invited me to edit the essays. David Gosling, when he was appointed the successor to Paul Abrecht, and the editors of *The Ecumenical Review*, when they offered to publish the *Festschrift*, renewed the invitation.

The distinction and the international character of the contributors is a sign of the range of Paul Abrecht's influence and his friendships. Furthermore, I suspect that an imaginative editor could tomorrow start to assemble a second body of writers, as illustrious and as international in character as those represented here. It would include Japan, Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union, and still other areas of the world. It would include physical scientists and specialists from other walks of life.

My responsibility has been the modest one of preparing the essays for publication. I have been cautious in tampering with the work of so distinguished a group of writers. But some of the chapters are translations from other languages, and some others are the work of writers for whom English is a second or third language. Hence I have taken some liberties in trying to put the writings into idiomatic English. After many experiences on drafting committees of the WCC, I have learned that even minor changes in language can be acts of cultural imperialism. I hope I have not been guilty of that. I hope I have never inadvertently changed anybody's meaning. Realizing that the ecumenical movement encompasses a variety of literary styles — along with the variety of theologies, cultural experiences, social theories and ideologies — I have sought to preserve the varieties rather than beat everything into a homogenized international bureaucratic style. I am grateful to the editorial staff of the WCC for much of the detailed copy-editing. Over the years I have had many occasions to appreciate the skill of that multi-competent, multi-lingual staff.

I have reduced the length of some of the essays, but only slightly. I hope I have not omitted any important point of any writer. But when several writers made the same point, as occasionally happened, I let the first writer (in the final sequence) have the fullest say, while the later writers suffered some indignities at

my hands. Even here I was not ruthless. I have kept in mind that sometimes the same point takes on a different meaning in a new context and therefore deserves repetition.

The essays tend to fall into two types. The first I have grouped in Part I, "History and Reminiscences". These give a variety of insights into the history of the WCC and its work on church and society. Some tell of highly personal memories and others of more public activities. All are contributions to history and grist for future historians. Following W.A. Visser 't Hooft's overview, the essays are arranged in roughly chronological order.

Part II, "Issues in Church and Society", takes up several specific concerns of the WCC and of theological ethics. It moves from regional studies into questions of economics and ethics, then into still more general issues of theology and ethics.

There is no firm division between the two parts. Just as there is no history without some exploration of the issues at stake in the history, so there is no analysis of issues that can ignore history. So some chapters might be moved from one part to another part of the collection. But I hope the sequence makes some sense and shows how the various writings contribute to a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

The essays would be unrepresentative of the work of Church and Society if they did not bring up some real arguments. Thus Ronald Preston disagrees with Harry de Lange and Charles Birch on issues of "limits to growth". Julio de Santa Ana disagrees with some others on the validity of utopian thinking. Max Kohnstamm and Albert van den Heuvel, both Netherlanders, have different opinions on the call of the churches to make declarations on issues of the day. It is characteristic of Paul Abrecht's leadership that over many years he encouraged such arguments and maintained a camaraderie, indeed a koinonia, among the debaters.

It is not the task of an editor's preface to become a personal testimony, and I shall not here try to rival the plaudits that so many writers bring to Paul Abrecht. But perhaps I may say that I regard it as an honour to edit this collection. I knew Paul as a personal friend and fellow student even before he entered his career with the WCC. Then in the WCC I have had many occasions to admire his leadership and, incidentally, to get acquainted with most of the writers of this *Festschrift*. I regard it as a high privilege to have a share in bringing this body of writings before the world.

Introduction

Philip A. Potter

It is unusual but appropriate that a *Festschrift* to Paul Abrecht should be published in the form of a special number of *The Ecumenical Review*. This *Review* exists to open up or focus issues which are emerging or at the centre of the ecumenical debate. During the thirty-four years he served the World Council of Churches (1949-1983) — from the year after its First Assembly in Amsterdam to its Sixth Assembly in Vancouver — Paul has contributed a great deal to *The Ecumenical Review*, either directly or by getting a galaxy of informed persons, especially lay persons, to write in this quarterly journal. The best tribute to the unique ecumenical ministry of Paul Abrecht is to gather together a wide variety of essays which either revive our ecumenical memory of some of the major landmarks in the development of ecumenical social thought and action or carry the discussion further.

I always think of Paul as being both genial and a genius. Looking up the Shorter Oxford Dictionary I find that "genial" has carried varied meanings since its appearance in the sixteenth century. It then meant "pertaining to marriage; also generations — now rare". Well, Paul is that rare person who has been married to the Council since he came to it a year after the two movements of Life and Work and Faith and Order came together to form the Council. He has been astonishingly generative of many ideas and programmes during these years, as the contributors to this *Festschrift* amply demonstrate. In the seventeenth century "genial" carried the further meaning of "conducive to growth". Paul has not only accompanied the growth of the Council, but he has been a major figure in making this growth in thought and action possible, as the following pages indicate. In the eighteenth century, "genial" acquired the meaning of "cheerful, sympathetic, jovial, kindly, festive". Paul is in this sense very much of an eighteenth century Enlightenment man with salon wit and wisdom — not least in his own salon where he and his delightful and efficient wife, Audrey, have entertained so many people, and at the same time drawn out ideas from them and twisted their arms to participate in his many projects. His humour is proverbial, as is his memory for the oddities of ecumenical events and persons. Any dull committee or staff meeting is always enlivened by his interventions which never fail to raise a cathartic laugh. By the nineteenth century, "genial" became "pertaining to or marked by genius". And that Paul has been to a very marked degree.

The dictionary tells us that "genius" came into English usage in the sixteenth century with the sense of "demon or spirit in general". Paul has been a demon for work and for producing, with very slender resources, a massive array of con-

ferences, consultations and books, papers, etc., as well as getting people to work and produce. And, like a spirit, he is everywhere in his spritely way, nosing out issues, spotting people, and restlessly moving on to new ideas and programmes. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries described "genius" as "natural ability or aptitude, native intellectual power of an exalted type; extraordinary capacity for imaginative creation, original thought, invention, discovery". All this can be said about Paul, but his genius has a particular quality of modesty and humility about it, because he is a man in Christ, and recognizes that all he is and does is a gift of God, and that that gift is mediated through others. He has therefore been a great discoverer of other people who have had these qualities of genius and he has allowed them to offer their gifts to the enrichment of our ecumenical life and witness. Paul is like the famous Dr Johnson who said: "My genius is always in extremis." Such has been his utter and restless devotion to the ecumenical cause that Paul has never spared himself or his colleagues and friends. The business of God in a broken, rapidly changing world required that we be out there, almost *in extremis*, seeking to discuss his will and do it, before it is too late. The more sober, but no less titanic nineteenth century Thomas Carlyle wrote: "Genius... means transcendent capacity for taking trouble." Paul's natural abilities have been disciplined by his capacity for taking trouble and for sticking with incredible tenacity to the tasks in hand, as well as bullying all who have been around him to recognize the urgency and importance of the task. He owes a great deal here and much else to his wife and to his dedicated assistant, Christa Stalschus.

The significant thing is that Paul Abrecht has devoted his geniality and his genius as a minister of the gospel, with training in the social sciences and particularly in economics, to enable the churches to recognize that they "have practically unlimited opportunities to contribute their insights into the spiritual and moral problems of man and society in the midst of economic change; insights which cannot be expected from any other group in society". This he wrote in his brilliant and seminal book, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change*,[1] which summed up the wide-ranging study he master-minded and carried out on "The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change" (1955-1961). The passage contains implicitly or explicitly three crucial assumptions underlying Paul Abrecht's work.

In the first place, to speak of "contributing insights" is to assume that the debate about those spiritual and moral problems is already underway and not waiting for the churches to get started. In the 1960s it was sometimes said that the world was setting the agenda for the church. Paul Abrecht acted on that premise. His recognition of an ongoing debate and struggle over the problems of human society kept him from falling prey to a false missionary zeal (prevalent again today) that wants to monopolize at least the moral side of the debate. He prodded the churches to join the ongoing debate, even at the risk of having to realize that they were late-comers.

The notion of an ongoing debate also implies the commitment to an interdisciplinary approach, and Paul wanted the best minds from the disciplines to be involved. Here his "critical sixth sense", often cited in the contributions of this

[1]London, SCM Press, 1961.

volume, became invaluable. Besides the theologians he recruited in the earlier years predominantly scholars from the social sciences; later, he also got the natural scientists to join.

Secondly, Paul Abrecht was convinced about the uniqueness of the churches' contribution to the debate. One aspect of this had to do with the question of openness. For Paul an ecumenical debate was one that would include all those concerned with the given issue. Nobody was to be excluded, and this commitment to openness was often costly, especially when, starting in the sixties, many more partners began to join the debate, especially from the third world. The latter were not always taken seriously enough, and this remains a challenge.

The commitment to openness also involved the readiness continually to reformulate the issues. Thus "the responsible society" was followed by the notion of "rapid social change", to be followed still later by "the just, participatory and sustainable society". An uninstructed onlooker might see in these changes only impatience, hunger for new slogans, rather than expressions of flexibility and openness.

Obviously, clarifying the issues in open debate cannot always remain the only approach to be used. In the areas of racism and economic justice the WCC was eventually led to pass from debate to action or, more precisely, to move the debate onto a level that included action.

Thirdly, for Paul Abrecht the churches' contribution could be credible only if the churches allowed themselves to be faced with these issues in their own life. There was to be a two-way street, a word from the churches into the debate and from the debate into the churches. Throughout these years, this part of the work has been the hardest to accomplish, but the impressive array of publications originating from Church and Society proves that if there was lack of success, it was not for want of trying. (The genius who can succeed here is perhaps still in the making.)

In my copy of *The Churches and Rapid Social Change*, Paul has inscribed "to an old WCC colleague with affection". He was referring to the fact that we were staff colleagues in 1954-1960, and that I was much involved in the study on areas of rapid social change, encouraging youth and students to participate in it. Little did we know that we would be colleagues again from 1967 till he retired last year. I want to end this editorial introduction with a personal word of immense gratitude to Paul for the many ways in which he stimulated me not only to think but also to act, and often in costly ways, on the ecumenical challenge to the churches in social thought and action in obedience to the gospel. Imprinted on my heart, mind and will are some of the closing words of that book, which are as fresh today as when they were written nearly twenty-five years ago:

> The challenge to the church today is to uncover new strategies and forms of action which will enable it to witness to Christ within this political, social, and cultural revolution...
>
> The task before the churches is immense, but the power which Christ has given his church is more than sufficient...
>
> The problem today is perhaps not so much to "find" new forms of Christian action as to open our eyes to what Christ is already doing and to share his burden of tragedy and victory in order that the whole of mankind may come to know its true destiny.[2]

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[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

PART I

HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES

Oldham's Method in Abrecht's Hands

W.A. Visser 't Hooft

When Paul Abrecht became a staff member of the World Council of Churches in 1949, with the mandate to concentrate on ecumenical social thought and action, he found that the ecumenical movement, although still very young, had a certain tradition in this area. The first element in this tradition was that the churches participating in the ecumenical movement had clearly affirmed their common conviction that the churches should be concerned not only with the spiritual and moral life of individuals, but also with the problems of society. This had been the common mind of the delegates to the Life and Work conference of 1925 in Stockholm; and this was again declared by the second Life and Work conference at Oxford in 1937, in the message drafted by Archbishop William Temple and adopted by the whole conference: "The forces of evil against which Christians have to contend are found not only in the hearts of men as individuals, but have entered into and infected the structure of society, and there also must be combatted."

It is rather astonishing that this insight formulated nearly half a century ago is still being called in question by defenders of a purely individualistic and otherworldly religiosity, who argue that such a socially relevant gospel is an invention of the revolutionary 1960s. Abrecht would have to defend this part of the ecumenical heritage against many attacks.

A second important part of the tradition was the quite substantial consensus on the content of the Christian social ethic, as worked out at Stockholm, Oxford and Amsterdam (First Assembly of the WCC), culminating in the summary concept of "the responsible society". The third element of the tradition was the method and approach used to enable the churches to make their own specific contribution to the life of society. I call this method the Oldham method because it was J.H. Oldham who introduced it into the ecumenical movement, and because it expressed his conception of the calling of the church in our time.

One of the most significant aspects of the life work of Paul Abrecht is that he developed the inherent possibilities of this method with remarkable consistency and imagination. What is the origin of Oldham's method? As a result of the Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council in 1927, Oldham became deeply impressed by the progress of secularism in all parts of the world. The rise of the totalitarian ideologies was its most recent expression. He decided therefore to concentrate all his energy on the attempt to find an adequate Christian answer to this tremendous crisis. In 1934, Life and Work invited him to become chairman of its research commission, which had the responsibility of

preparing the Second World Conference on Life and Work (1937). Oldham accepted the invitation without hesitation. To John R. Mott, who was strongly against his acceptance because it would interfere greatly with Oldham's work for the IMC, he said that this invitation was for him an opportunity which for years he had been praying and looking for. For with the assistance of competent full-time staff members, he could now begin to mobilize the churches for their task in the modern world.

Oldham's method

Oldham's method can be summarized in four points:

1) to discover the men and women who can best help the churches understand the nature of the crisis of society;
2) to arrive, with the help of these men and women, at a definition of the fundamental issues with which the churches should be concerned in order to render their witness to society;
3) to promote an interdisciplinary approach to these issues and particularly a dialogue between theologians and lay people;
4) to present the results to the churches for study and appropriate action.

With regard to the first point, Oldham felt strongly that most church leaders lived in a self-centred ecclesiastical world and that most theologians concentrated on problems of interest to other theologians but not to the laity. They needed the help of men and women living in the midst of the social crisis and trying to overcome it. Oldham spoke often of the "best or ablest minds that the church could command". He did not mean to deliver the church into the hands of a small intellectual elite. Solid knowledge and competence were important. But it was also true that: "The clearer understanding of the significance of Christian faith for the actual life of our time which we desiderate is not primarily a matter of scholarship and learning. It is rather the fruit of spiritual insight and understanding."[1] Since lay people were constantly confronted with the tensions and problems of society, their contribution was essential. In 1935, Oldham said to the Executive Committee of Life and Work with its 24 members (of whom only four were laymen) that in this matter of preparing the 1937 conference on "Church, Community and State" the lay person was more important than the theologian. He felt so strongly about this that he put the following sentence into the proposals concerning the creation of a World Council of Churches, submitted to the 1937 world conferences: "The witness which the church in the modern world is called to give is such, that in certain spheres the predominant voice in the utterance of it must be that of lay people holding posts of responsibility and influence in the secular world."

Oldham had remarkable success in applying this method. The luncheons at the Athenaeum in London, to which he invited possible candidates for his movement and which ended generally in a promise of the victim to cooperate, became famous. And the "moot", a company of men as different as the poet T.S. Eliot, the historian Arnold Toynbee, the philosopher Donald McKinnon, became a

[1] *The Church and its Function in Society*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1937, p.166.

productive think-tank. We can call this stage of looking for the right people the Diogenes stage.

The next stage should be called the Socratic stage, for now the whole emphasis is on the identification of the fundamental issues. I remember meetings called by Oldham during which several participants at the beginning wanted to offer their particular recipes for the solution of the social and spiritual crisis. But Oldham told the group again and again, before talking of solutions we must first learn to ask the right questions. Was our diagnosis sufficiently thorough?

Once the issues have been defined, the intensive interdisciplinary discussion begins. This takes two forms: the exchange of memoranda and the relatively small international consultation. Oldham secured more than a hundred contributions on the various aspects of the theme of the Oxford conference. These were submitted to critics from other countries and other churches. At least three or four hundred persons took part in this interchange of thought. At the same time, small internationally composed groups with a membership of ten to thirty met in different areas. This whole process led to the preparation of several volumes or symposia, which were translated into different languages.

The final stage is that of presenting the results to the churches, so as to confront them with the challenge of new insights concerning their witness and task, and to enable the churches to make a critical evaluation of the work done during the period of preparation. So as to ensure the presence of a sufficient number of Christian laity, it was agreed that in addition to the three hundred delegates directly appointed by the churches, one hundred members of the conference would be appointed by Life and Work. Most of these were men and women with practical experience of public affairs. Of the six main sections of the conference, three were presided over by laymen.

Abrecht's enlargement of the method

To a considerable extent, Oldham's method was used in the preparation of the First Assembly of the World Council in 1948. Thus, when Paul Abrecht began his ecumenical task in 1949, he did not need to invent a new method of work. But that does not mean that there was no place for pioneering and imagination. On the contrary. The World Council was now to become truly worldwide in its outlook. The task before Abrecht was to apply a method, which so far had been tried out in one part of the world with a common cultural tradition, to the whole world with a great diversity of cultures. Would the "best minds" still find common ground when they represented many traditions? Again it would become necessary to enter into dialogue with men and women representing very different approaches to the problems which humanity had to face in our time. Would the method work when men and women would be brought together from the worlds of the historical and social sciences and from the natural sciences and modern technology?

It is not possible to mention all the men and women who proved ready to participate in the work of Church and Society. But we must mention a number who made specially noteworthy contributions.

There were those who could be called the generalists because they helped to think out the general programme: M.M. Thomas of India, a layman who knew

how to stimulate theologians but also a lay theologian who knew how to challenge the laity to face fundamental issues, accompanied the Church and Society programme faithfully from the beginning. Denys Munby of Oxford University, author of the very significant *Christianity and Economic Problems*,[2] gave much of his time. Egbert de Vries, Rector of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, made his worldwide experience of economic problems of development available to Church and Society. Margaret Mead brought the contribution of her anthropological knowledge. H.M. de Lange, Dutch economist who wrote his doctor's thesis on "The Responsible Society", interpreted the Church and Society programme among industrialists and economists.

Among the theologians who have been especially active and made constructive contributions, I would mention John C. Bennett, Charles West, Thomas S. Derr, Roger L. Shinn and Walter Muelder of the USA; Ronald Preston and John Habgood, the Bishop of Durham and more recently Archbishop of York, of Great Britain; André Dumas of France; H.D. Wendland of the Federal Republic of Germany; Adeolu Adegbola of Nigeria; and especially Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of India.

Soon it became necessary to think in continental and regional terms. Western Europe had its new problems of building the European Community. In order to bring together people with Christian convictions involved in the construction of the new European institutions, a committee on Christian responsibility for the future of Europe was set up. It had no formal connection with the World Council, but served as a meeting place for those of different political backgrounds who wanted to see their task in a Christian perspective. Abrecht became its secretary. Among the members were C.L. Patijn of the Netherlands, member of parliament; André Philip of France, economist who held several governmental positions; Jean Rey of Belgium, who became the President of the European Common Market; Max Kohnstamm of the Netherlands, close collaborator of Jean Monnet; Gustav Heinemann, who became President of the Federal Republic of Germany; John Edwards, member of parliament in Great Britain; Mario Rollier, nuclear physicist from Italy, active in the European movement.

In Asia, where M.M. Thomas was the chief consultant, S.L. Parmar, economist, also from India, gave valuable help. So did T.B. Simatupang of Indonesia and Mikio Sumiya, economist from Japan. Masao Takenaka, theologian with a strong interest in social ethics, also exerted a wide influence on the Church and Society discussions in Asia.

When in the 1950s and 1960s so many nations in Africa gained their independence, it became urgent to find African leaders who would help to discover what the role of the churches and of their members should be at this time of nation-building. John Karefa-Smart, medical doctor, who became a minister in the government of Sierra Leone, was one of the first. Kofi A. Busia of Ghana, the sociologist who became prime minister of his country, participated in the ecumenical programme. Z.K. Matthews of South Africa, teacher of many of the new leaders in Africa, who joined the World Council staff, put his wide experience at the service of Church and Society.

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[2]London, Macmillan, 1956.

Latin America seemed to have had less attention than it deserved. This was due to the fact that in the early years of the World Council there were very few member churches in that continent. But Church and Society pioneered by organizing a number of consultations leading to the creation of the Latin American Commission on Church and Society, a body which paved the way for the strong development of Christian social activity in the later years. Luis Odell was its first secretary. Mauricio Lopez of Argentina served for a time on the staff of Church and Society in Geneva, and helped to put Latin American problems on the ecumenical agenda. Later on, he became a victim of the oppression in his country and was among the many who "disappeared".

But there was not only the geographical expansion. So far, Church and Society had concentrated on the social issues, but was there not at the same time a scientific and technological revolution? An attempt was made to find scientists who would share in the studies. Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, was particularly active in this undertaking. Very special mention should also be made of Charles Birch, the Australian biologist, and of John Francis, the nuclear physicist from Scotland.

The second aspect of the Oldham method was the concentration on the identification and definition of the fundamental issue or issues to be studied. When Abrecht began his work for the World Council, it seemed that this task had already been accomplished by the First Assembly in 1948, when it chose the concept of the responsible society as the criterion of Christian social thought and action. But though that concept could and did give a clear sense of direction, it was too general to serve as a focus for study and discussion. A more concrete theme was needed.

In the light of the discussions with the Asian participants in the Asian Study Conference at Lucknow in 1952, and with delegates from the third world countries in the Second Assembly of the WCC in 1954, it soon became clear that the urgent problem of the following years was that of the radical transformation of society in Asia, Africa and Latin America. So the central theme became: "The common Christian responsibility towards areas of rapid social change". The work on this theme kept Church and Society busy in the 1950s. But in the 1960s it became necessary to re-examine the situation. It was becoming evident that the problems of the developing countries could not be solved unless the structure of the world's economic order was radically changed. It is remarkable that several years before the revolutionary year 1968, the working committee on Church and Society proposed a world conference with the title "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time". The intensive debate concerning the theology of revolution at the conference and in the following years showed that Church and Society had again chosen the right subject.

Discussions with scientists who had become interested in the World Council's approach led, at the beginning of the 1970s, to stronger emphasis on the ethical problems resulting from the astounding achievements in the field of science and technology. In 1974 the focus became "The Future of Man and Society in a World of Science-Based Technology", and this was reformulated in 1979 as "Faith, Science and the Future", the theme of the world conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In

the meantime, the problems of genetics and the quality of life had also become part of the Church and Society studies. At the MIT conference, scientists, economists and theologians proved to be equally disturbed about the increasing dependence of science and technology on the military establishment. So it was natural that Church and Society should give serious attention to the acute problem of the use of nuclear power. In 1982 this was the theme of an international public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament in Amsterdam.

The third aspect of the Oldham method was to organize an interdisciplinary discussion concerning the themes which had been chosen. Abrecht used this technique in an intensive manner and organized very many relatively small consultations where men and women from different areas of life exchanged their views and convictions. It seems to me that some of the most creative work of Church and Society has been done in these groups, because they were small enough to make intimate and profound dialogue possible. I once asked a well-known scientist what was the power of attraction which made him add to his full programme these meetings under church auspices. He answered that this was the only place he knew where the most fundamental questions concerning his work were being discussed in depth.

These consultations were opportunities to confront theologians with problems which they had so far ignored. An important example was the critical questions raised at the beginning of the great debate about ecology, whether the tendency of people today with their technology and consumer's mentality was not due to the Judeo-Christian conception of humankind as having dominion over creation. The theologians were thus obliged to rediscover those elements in the biblical tradition which strongly qualified and limited this dominion, but which had been neglected in the teaching of the churches.

The fourth aspect of the Oldham policy is to present the results of the studies to the churches. In the Abrecht period, this has been done in several ways. First of all, there was the publication of comprehensive surveys and symposia on the central themes. Some of them are reports of consultations. The bulletin *Anticipation* has been generally used for this purpose. Of special importance have been the volumes on *Man in Rapid Social Change*, by Egbert de Vries,[3] and on *The Churches and Rapid Social Change*,[4] and the four volumes of essays on *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*,[5] *Responsible Government in a Revolutionary Age*,[6] *Economic Growth in World Perspective*,[7] and *Man in Community*.[8] Also important was the preparatory volume for the 1979 conference, *Faith, Science and the Future*.[9] These, together with such substantial reports as those of the conference in Thessalonica (1959), the Geneva conference (1966), the conference at MIT (1979), and the public hearing in Amsterdam on nuclear weapons and disarmament (1981), have provided for the present generation of Christians a

[3]London, SCM Press, 1961.
[4]Paul Abrecht, London, SCM Press, 1961.
[5]John C. Bennett ed., London, SCM Press, 1966.
[6]Z.K. Matthews ed., London, SCM Press, 1966.
[7]Denys Munby ed., London, SCM Press, 1966.
[8]Egbert de Vries ed., London, SCM Press, 1966.
[9]Paul Abrecht et al. eds, Geneva, WCC, 1978.

wealth of information and inspiration on social ethics, such as no other generation has ever had.

The reporting to the churches also took the form of the preparation of the Church and Society sections of the WCC assemblies. But since the assemblies could only give limited time to the social problems, the working committee on Church and Society decided, in 1962, to propose a world conference on "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time". The World Council's Central Committee agreed that this conference should speak *to* the churches rather than *for* the churches. The conference met in Geneva in 1966. The majority of the participants were lay people, and Asia, Africa and Latin America sent fifty percent of the total number.[10] This conference led to intensive discussions in many of the member churches.

In a similar way, but this time with the emphasis on the issues arising as a result of the scientific and technological revolutions, the 1979 conference at MIT spoke a strong word of warning to the churches. It was followed up by the public hearing (organized together with the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs) on nuclear weapons and disarmament in Amsterdam.

Conclusion

Oldham accepted the responsibility for the programme of Life and Work in 1934. Abrecht has been the executive officer of Church and Society from 1949 to 1983. Both were, of course, supported by committees and by colleagues, but both were key men in the sense that they had the threads in their hands. Both used the same method because both had the same conceptions of the mandate of the ecumenical movement with regard to society. I believe that this consistent adherence during half a century to a policy that was the fruit of imaginative thinking is the main reason why Church and Society has taken such an important place in the life of the ecumenical movement.

Church and Society has thus rendered a great service to the ecumenical movement as a whole. It has made it very clear that that movement is not an introverted ecclesiastical undertaking, that the unity which it seeks is a unity for the sake of the world, that it has the prophetic task to point towards the solution of the acute social problems of our time, that it seeks therefore to help the churches to give a common, not discordant, witness in the social realm and to ensure the relevance of that witness by speaking out after having thoroughly studied the problems concerned together with the church members who as laymen and laywomen are directly involved in the life of society.

All those to whom the health of the ecumenical movement is a matter of concern and intercession have therefore reason to be grateful to Paul Abrecht for his life work.

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[10]See *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World, op.cit.*

The First Ten Years

C.L. Patijn

When Paul Abrecht was still in his years of apprenticeship with the World Council of Churches, I happened to have lunch in New York with one of the Council's founding fathers, Henry P. van Dusen. He seemed to be rather surprised at the young Paul Abrecht's obvious success as a newcomer in that highly sophisticated nerve centre of Geneva. I remember my answer, given rather flippantly: "Paul is an American understatement, and that is very exceptional." Now, decades later, the World Council of Churches recognizes how that young American Baptist became a source of drive and skill in the service of the oikoumene.

My contacts with Paul Abecht were close, especially in the first half of his career with the Department on Church and Society. He arrived in Geneva one year after the Amsterdam Assembly of 1948, and accordingly his terms of reference were more or less prescribed by the report of Section III of that Assembly. But statements of conferences for Paul Abrecht have always been starting points for new initiatives and new fields of endeavour. In a memorandum issued by the Study Department in the year before the Second Assembly at Evanston, a study group laid down the lines for the following years by stating that the Amsterdam conference, in considering the moral and spiritual aspects of economic problems, "was significant, but more in terms of general attitudes than specific issues".

Since the criterion of a "responsible society" (Amsterdam) implied that economic activities be subordinated to social ends, the churches were forced to become more specific in their social ethics. They had no choice but to make the attempt to concern themselves with concrete situations in order to come to grips with the real needs of modern life. The term "responsible society" had to be made flesh in very different surroundings. Old social and economic battle lines were to be transcended in a changing world. Things had to be considered for what they were within themselves before going over the emotions and spontaneous moral reactions they provoked in people.

Those were the catchwords confronting the new secretary of Church and Society, as you can find them in the publications of that time. He was thrown into deep waters by the ecumenical situation of the first post-war and post-colonial years, and thereby everyone expected him neither to flee back to the safe highland of more or less innocent middle axioms, nor to be drowned by details. After each committee meeting in which such guidelines were laid down the representatives of the churches went home, leaving the secretary at Malagnou to plan and organize things in such a way that they would make ecumenical sense.

The Evanston Assembly of 1954 was the first Assembly in which Paul Abrecht was responsible for the organization of the section on social questions. It was also the first time for the ecumenical movement to relate general concepts such as "responsible society" to concrete social problems. It also opened a new field of ecumenical study and action by addressing itself to some of the problems of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in a project called "The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change". During the next six years, Paul Abrecht was deeply involved in matters of the third world and the Christian concern for social justice in a variety of different societies in the non-western parts of the ecumenical constituency. It is a miracle that he came out of this ordeal unscathed, with an enhanced prestige, and with many friends he had made on the way.

Paul Abrecht was aware from the start of his work in Geneva that he had to spread his attention over very different subjects in order to look for relevant social ethics in specific situations. While deeply absorbed in work on "rapid social change", he used part of his spare time for other, even extra-curricular activities. In one of these I had the privilege of his cooperation.

For many years he acted as the convener of a small group of politicians who tried to draw the attention of the churches in western Europe to the moral implications and hopeful perspectives of the emerging European Economic Community with its far-reaching institutional changes in European society. This was not a World Council project, but a very special case for responsible action by churches in a regional context. A few politically oriented laymen — André Philip, John Edwards and myself — started this group which was initially called the Commission for the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation (CCREC). Especially in the first period of the movement for greater European unity, it served its purpose in drawing the attention of the churches most concerned to a new field of moral responsibilities. I am still deeply grateful to Paul Abrecht for the very effective help he gave us freely over several years in the organization of this simple project — especially since the American convener showed a deep understanding of the European scene and the kind of people we should bring in.

Here again he demonstrated a rather uncommon talent: to look for new fields of action and to set up research and relevant ethical discussion in unbroken ground. I sometimes got the impression that he was only really happy when he could make a fresh start and initiate new programmes for the churches, for which he could mobilize highly qualified experts by scores.

In his later years with the World Council Paul Abrecht managed to secure a substantial contribution from the scientific community in the programme on "Faith, Science and the Future". He has engaged the full cooperation of lay people in the formulation of the ethics of the Christian church in a new age. And in doing so, he has succeeded in establishing the World Council "as a serious participant in the ongoing worldwide debate and assessment of the benefits and risks of modern science and technology".[1]

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[1]Report of the Working Group on the Future of Church and Society, *Anticipation*, No. 30, July 1983.

No small praise. And a lesson for all those in the churches who are inclined to prefer ideology to facts and to shun the cooperation of responsible experts in their ethical crusades. Churches that yield to such temptation will not be welcomed as serious participants in responsible centres of decision.

Let me conclude on a personal note. I have worked in very different sectors of public and academic life and in private affairs, but I have nowhere worked with greater pleasure than with Paul Abrecht. I shall not easily forget the fascinating working parties in the first decade of Church and Society with John Bennett, M.M. Thomas, the late Denys Munby, Egbert de Vries and others, in which Paul acted as host, organizer, motor and source of fun and information. Nor shall I forget the many nights at conferences in which Paul and I had to draft statements or reports. It was rightly stated by the conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1979) that in a world "no longer sustained by an optimistic belief in progress" we are in need of "symbols of meaning and hope which set our programmes within the horizon which provides both meaning and direction". Paul Abrecht, with his combination of energy and modesty, has made a contribution in this respect for which we shall remain deeply grateful.

The Development of "Church and Society", 1952-1966

Egbert de Vries

My relationship with Paul Abrecht started during the preparation for the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1954), where I was elected chairman of the working committee on Church and Society. But it was early in 1953 when we really met in a small group in Geneva. I had just visited The Hague, in a quick trip out of Washington, DC, to meet with Paul in order to focus on issues related to Church and Society.

Here, the term "social change" was interpreted explicitly to refer to "churches and rapid social change", later the title of a book by Paul. The theme recognized the necessity for churches, church bodies and Christians in general to rethink their testimony and action in a dynamic age.

The fifties were years of decolonization — first in Asia, then in Africa — of the beginning of a communication revolution, of atomic power and armaments. In the light of these developments the destiny of humankind as an inter-reactive social unit became apparent.

These ideas had to be translated into a programme of study, to be followed by action. In the summer of 1953 the committee met in the vineyards of Switzerland. Among the participants were Robert Bilheimer, one level higher up in the secretariat of the WCC, and M.M. Thomas from India, who later became my successor as chairman of the working committee. Whereas nation-building after colonial dependency and ethical consequences of the new scientific achievements were their major "entries" into the area of common concern, Paul Abrecht time and time again brought us back to the theme of "social change" in society (global and national) and the involvement of the churches in these processes. This meeting was in preparation for the Herrenalb consultation on the mandate for the WCC and individual churches and Christians under the circumstances of the second half of the twentieth century.

Of course, we were influenced by other leaders of the ecumenical movement, notably Hendrik Kraemer and Willem Visser 't Hooft. We saw Christianity in its minority position, no longer able to rally secular power (or even armies and navies) in order to protect and promote the role of churches. I clearly remember how Paul stressed the fact that churches, separately and together, ought to analyze and study before passing judgment on their own role in society, let alone non-church social movements and structures.

It was clear to us that the main burden of implementing any recommendations and insights was to be on the shoulders of Paul Abrecht, with a minutely

small (but highly dedicated and capable) staff and enthusiastic but widely spread committee members.

For Paul, strongly supported by his wife Audrey, this was a matter of personal faith, of indomitable strength and persistence (for over thirty years), of an uncanny capacity to listen and synthesize seemingly irreconcilable opinions under the light of the gospel, of incorporation of experiences, observations and studies by a growing number of older and younger "church statesmen". Among that group, Paul in private and group discussions or large conferences always held to our common basic belief in Jesus Christ and his mission to his followers.

The Herrenalb consultation confirmed the growing together of European and North American theological thought (symbolized by Karl Barth and Walter Rauschenbusch) and social action on the dual basis of "responsible society" and "stewardship" (environmental problems). Much may have changed in the world and in ecumenical circles, but these two principles remain cornerstones of Church and Society concern. Apart from Paul Abrecht and Robert Bilheimer, I should mention Kees van Doorn and John Bennett, the rapporteurs and drafters of the conference document.

Widening arenas of attention

Now the road was open for widening attention more fully to other parts of the world. Paul visited South Africa together with John Karefa-Smart, the World Health Organization Director for Africa from Sierra Leone. They were confronted with the racial segregation policy, which was hardening at that time. (When in 1958 Visser 't Hooft sent me, as a Dutch-speaking Calvinist, to South Africa, I also found remaining doors of conciliation closing — and ecumenical social action thwarted by nationalistic legislation and social organizations. However, the visit confirmed my friendship with Z.K. Matthews, principal of the black Fort Hare University, and some people in Stellenbosch University.)

Paul Abrecht also ventured into the Caribbean and South America. He walked, with a local preacher who had the confidence of the Rastafarians, through a part of Kingston considered very unsafe for foreigners, notably Yankees. He found the beginnings of "liberation theology" as an answer to social and political local oppression. He found also a burgeoning ecumenical movement in Uruguay, Brazil, Peru and other countries. After that visit, Latin America became an integral part of the ecumenical movement. It should be added that many priests and bishops in the Roman Catholic Church in that part of the world took the lead in social awareness and action by the churches.

The book by Paul, *The Churches and Rapid Social Change*[1] gave evidence of this new open window on a world in turmoil and stress, and it bears witness to these very important developments in the Spanish-speaking world.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, in 1959, Church and Society organized a consultation in Saloniki where the Orthodox churches felt fully integrated in the social concerns of the WCC. That experience also paved the way for full membership of the Eastern European churches at the Assembly in New Delhi in 1961.

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[1]London, SCM Press, 1961.

The relations with the Coptic and Protestant churches in Egypt were very strong, thanks mainly to the late Bishop Samuel (later murdered, together with President Sadat, by fanatics). In Egypt, the Roman Catholic Church was already, in the fifties, a full member of the National Council of Churches — a forerunner of later cooperative efforts between the World Council and the Vatican.

The year 1959 gave new emphasis to the concerns of the Department on Church and Society. Two staff members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations visited Geneva and sounded out our interest in the problems of physical hunger and deprivation. They met with a highly positive response, and I had the honour and challenge to be nominated as the observer to the annual conference of FAO in October 1959, where the Freedom from Hunger Campaign was begun — an appeal to all nations to alleviate hunger (and disease and ignorance) on a world scale. This move brought the suffering and plight of the two billion small peasants and their families into the limelight, together with population problems and family planning.

In its aftermath, it propelled the World Council into socio-economic action through projects and programmes — through the Special Action on Social Projects (SASP). The link can be found in the large Geneva conference on Church and Society, held in 1966 on the theme "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time".

Here Paul Abrecht played an outstanding role as organizer of that important ecumenical conference. Although study, research and conscientization (creating awareness of urgent problems) remained important concerns, the responsibility for the alleviation of discrimination (racial, social and economic) through *joint action* became so apparent that the 1967 Montreux consultation and the Fourth Assembly of the WCC in Uppsala 1968 could give form and content to that ecumenical mandate.

My departure from the Netherlands to Pittsburgh in March 1966 ended my formal connection with Church and Society, and I know that my Dutch successors (Pieter Kuin and H.M. de Lange) found the same climate and responsiveness of Paul Abrecht to their concerns.

The influence of an ecumenical leader

It should be recognized that during this period of growing ecumenical insights and action, the forces of nationalism, discrimination and oppression also acted more openly and perversely. Also, some of the post-World War II dedication to world development (United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Marshall Plan, the USA Point Four Programme) faded away under the impact of the cold war between the super-powers, the post-independence problems in Asia and Africa, and the fading of enthusiasm in the face of severe frustrations.

Already among the membership of some United States churches one could discern impatience with and distrust of the ecumenical movement, as embodied in the World Council and the (USA) National Council of Churches — attitudes that became still more apparent in the seventies. In some smaller Western European countries the churches expanded their diaconal function into "world diaconia", in the strong emphasis of cooperation with and assistance to other

parts of the world. Many local congregations in the USA found it hard to accept that principle.

Paul went back to Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1969 to strengthen himself for the new struggle for equity and cooperation. However, that period, after 1966, is described by other authors in this symposium.

But with all the changes in and around the ecumenical work over the last thirty years, Paul Abrecht stands as an outstanding defender and preserver of real ecumenicity and international (inter-racial) united study and action. In fact, as we all know, Paul broke all the organizational rules that nobody should serve the WCC for such an extended period of time.

Paul had, over three decades, a stimulating and supportive role on the awareness, in all Christian churches and beyond, of the interaction between church and society. Even if in European or American churches some groups maintained that their message was restricted to one of personal salvation, in what later were called "developing countries" that type of theology was impossible.

Personally, I learned from Paul the value of persistence in major convictions of the church in a changing world, and flexibility in application of those principles. Understanding, through listening and consultation, of the manifold problems in a changing society is surely one thing that Paul mastered. But then he insisted upon a viable and responsible course of action in the midst of oppression and resistance.

The Asian Churches and the Study of Rapid Social Change

M.M. Thomas

My collaboration with Paul Abrecht in the Church and Society studies covers a long period — actually from the time of his joining the staff of the World Council of Churches, soon after the First Assembly (Amsterdam 1948), through the years of the study on rapid social change (1955-1961) and of the studies leading to and from the world conference on church and society, Geneva (1966), to the end of the Fourth Assembly (Uppsala 1968). Even when I was no longer a member of the Church and Society working committee, Paul kept me involved in the study on the "Human Future in a Technological Age". In many ways he has been my mentor, through a fruitful colleagueship which developed over the years. Even after I left active collaboration in his programmes, the residence of Paul and Audrey Abrecht at rue du Mont Blanc and the office of Paul Abrecht and Christa Stalschus at the Ecumenical Centre have provided me my spiritual relaxation within the complex ecumenical set-up. Since I should not make this essay just the recollection of a friendship, I leave that subject here.

However, it is appropriate for me to say that Paul Abrecht has been unquestionably the prime architect of ecumenical social thought and of the processes which have developed it after the formation of the World Council. He has been the catalyst for getting hosts of lay people, knowledgeable in various spheres of modern society, to work hard for the programmes. Many of these lay people had, through their personal experience with the established churches, become sceptical of the relevance of Christianity for modern life; hence I have always maintained that the Church and Society study programmes under Abrecht have been one of the most important points of evangelistic outreach in the whole WCC.

To any programme he took up, he gave concentrated attention and built up an intimate team of colleagues to promote it. It often seemed that these programmes absorbed him in his working and leisure hours, and perhaps also his sleeping hours — so convinced was he of the significance of his work for the total life and mission of the ecumenical movement. His enthusiasm, coupled with his arguments, convinced many of the WCC staff colleagues. But if some of them couldn't see it (as many didn't), he would fight and fight hard. Even his worst critics knew the sincerity of his commitments and were prepared to let him go along in his own way. They were sure he would achieve something new, and he always did.

After this short preface, I must now go on to the topic on which I have chosen to write, namely the involvement of the WCC in the study by the Asian churches

of their responsibility in new Asian societies during the period of the WCC's Rapid Social Change study between Evanston (1954) and New Delhi (1961). Its relevance in this *Festschrift* lies in the fact that Paul Abrecht gave all his attention to preparing, promoting and concluding the study during that period. Since we were both involved in it together so far as Asia was concerned, it is difficult to be purely objective and impersonal. But my effort will be to consider the interaction between the Asian churches and the WCC in the study of Christian responsibility for society in the newly independent nations of Asia during the process of formation of the East Asia Christian Conference (now called the Christian Conference of Asia) and soon after, which is roughly the period of the Rapid Social Change study.

Before Evanston 1954

The churches in the Asian countries which attained independence in the forties and early fifties after World War II soon began taking national and local initiatives to consider and reformulate their Christian social witness in the new setting. This was partly in continuation with pre-independence initiatives and partly new. "Organizations like the economic life committees of the national Christian councils, the great agricultural institutes, schools of social work, organizers of rural and other service projects under Christian auspices as well as movements like the Christian Asram movement in India"[1] have been making vital contributions towards solving specific issues. Significant contributions to Christian social thought came from "small groups like the Youth Christian Council of Action in South India, the Christian Fellowship for Social Education in North India and Japan, schools of sociology held in Ceylon, study groups of professors and students of social science in Tokyo". Mention must also be made of the fellowship in social thought and action under the inspiration of the political commission of the World Student Christian Federation, which produced the grey book, *Christians in the World Struggle.* The Federation had been inspiring Christian professors in Asian colleges and universities to form university teachers' fellowships to reconsider the nature and function of higher education in independent Asia.

In some Asian countries the churches acted together to meet specific challenges. In 1951 the Federation of Philippine Christian Churches conducted twenty regional conferences on the Christian response to communism. In India, the 1950s saw the establishment of the Christian Institute for the Study of Society and the Committee for Literature on Social Concerns (both in close relation to the National Council of Churches of India) theological seminaries and Christian colleges. In Japan, the social commission of the United Church of Christ (Kyodan) and the study commission of the NCC are worthy of special mention. The NCC of Indonesia in its 1953 Assembly expressed its concern for a clearer definition of church-state relations in that country and called for greater political awareness on the part of the churches. Summing up these various initiatives "an ecumenical survey", prepared for Evanston 1954, said: "Whether as a result of

[1]All quotations in this paragraph are taken from *Social Questions. The Responsible Society in World Perspective: an Ecumenical Survey*, New York, Harper, 1954.

failure in policy at high levels, or of the momentum of a past tradition, ... the churches are developing their social witness at a relatively slow pace, while social changes are occurring with unprecedented rapidity."

The involvement of the WCC in the post-war thinking of Asian churches on social questions began by 1948. The first post-war conference of East Asian church leaders was convened by R.B. Manikam and S.C. Leung under the joint auspices of the International Missionary Council and the World Council at Bangkok in 1949. It met in the wake of rapid political changes in Asia, including the communist "liberation" of China. Therefore it gave serious thought to the church's witness in the social and political life of new Asia. Its findings spoke of political freedom that "awakened the hitherto submerged peoples of East Asia to a new sense of dignity and historical mission", creating a basic revolutionary ferment with its inescapable power-and-ideological struggles: "Ideological conflicts are becoming increasingly integral to the political and social life of East Asia. The victory of communist leadership in China has created an essentially new situation there and at the same time made the tensions more acute in other Asian lands." The churches were called to give up their "passive" indifferent or neutral attitude towards the crucial political and social issues of the times and become congregations giving "effective witness to the divine righteousness in society".[2]

It was in 1952 that this concern for the church's witness for justice was reawakened on an all-Asia level by the WCC. The occasion was the meeting of its Central Committee in Lucknow, India, 1952. It met at the Isabella Thoburn College, of which Sarah Chakko, then Asian president of the WCC, was principal. In connection with that meeting, the WCC study division convened a conference of representatives of member churches in Asia offering "an opportunity for Asian Christian leaders to examine some of the major issues" of mission and unity, the responsible society and the problems of racial, class and caste tensions in Asia.

One section of the conference, under the chairmanship of Yohanon Mar Thoma, dealt with the theme "Responsible Society in East Asia in the Light of the World Situation". It was concerned with "social justice, that is to say, with the development of social conditions in which human dignity and freedom can find their expression as befits the nature and dignity of man as a child of God". With the help of lay Asian Christian experts in economics, politics and society, "key problems" like land-reform, patterns of industrialization, the structure of the state in relation to promotion of freedom and justice, the international situation vis-à-vis Asian social reconstruction and the role of the church in political and social action came up for detailed discussion and formulation of findings. (Incidentally, my first vivid recollection of Paul Abrecht is of our sitting together every night as secretaries for this section to summarize the discussions and findings of the day for presentation to the meeting the day after. This became a pattern of joint writing of "statements" in Church and Society consultations which continued until the beginning of the Geneva conference 1966.)

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[2]*The Christian Prospect in Eastern Asia,* papers and minutes of the East Asia Christian Conference, December 1949, New York, Friendship Press, 1950.

The Lucknow findings stressed land reform "to get rid of the old feudal land-holding relationships and improve the conditions of those who cultivate the soil, and to give justice to the land-hungry peasant", by coupling it with a "balanced programme of agriculture, rural industry, social education and cooperatives". It also emphasized state initiative for "a planned programme of industrialization" in which "certain key industries must be nationalized" while encouraging private enterprise, and for tapping the resources most fully from Asia itself and reinforcing them with "technical assistance and economic aid from abroad". It also showed how the big-power struggle "with its hot and cold wars militates against progress in social reconstruction" in Asia, by its inherent tendency to strengthen "conservative and reactionary" political groups and forces in the East Asian scene. And it justified the non-alignment policy of Asian nations as an effort to create "an area of moral independence and judgment on concrete issues which might become a force for peace". The churches were asked to recognize "the necessity of political action as a means of promoting social justice," to provide a democratic framework by helping to give Christians the necessary moral and spiritual dynamic, and to exercise a prophetic ministry in all situations. "At the different levels of the church's life, in the local parish, in the national and international sphere of the church's life, there is need to develop techniques and programmes of social service and action which will make a contribution towards humanizing the social and technical revolution which is taking place in all the social groups."[3]

These findings of the WCC East Asia consultation were big news in the secular press of India. They also provided the basis for the Central Committee (Lucknow 1952) to issue a Message to the member churches, emphasizing the concern for the elimination of poverty, the establishment of social justice in Asian countries and the responsibility of the worldwide Christian community in this task. After noting "the vast dimension of the revolution" in newly independent Asia and the direct relevance of "the Christian understanding of man" to Asia's search for "new foundations for society", the Central Committee called for the worldwide church's participation with the Asian churches in their local witness in their new situation.

Continuing the stimulus of Lucknow 1952 and as approved by the Lucknow study consultation, a symposium, *Christianity and the Asian Revolution*, edited by R.B. Manikam (secretary for East Asia jointly for the International Missionary Council and the WCC) appeared before Evanston 1954. Besides giving a detailed survey of the new situation in society, religion and politics which the churches faced, the book also contained a common statement by Asian Christians under the title "Asian Churchmen Speak". It came out of another consultation in Asia. It said: "Being one with the peoples of East Asia, we are keenly aware of the widespread longing for a new and just social order which is burning in the hearts of so many here today. We believe that such an order of society is God's offer to us, but we know that it can only be realized through a rebirth of man's community life in Christ. It is in this conviction that we are endeavouring

[3]Quotations from the report *Christ — the Hope of Asia*, Madras, Christian Literature Society, 1953, pp. 27-32.

to work together for our peoples and our nations; and we believe that our fellowship in the ecumenical movement can strengthen us all for this great task."[4]

All this led the Evanston Preparatory Commission on Social Questions (chairman, C.L. Patijn; secretary, Paul Abrecht) to report to the Assembly that a "new stage of Christian social thought" had been reached in the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and to add a "conclusion" which said: "Perhaps the most important single social problem confronting the churches today is their task in relation to the economically and technically underdeveloped countries." Their report ended with a quotation from the second report of the commission on the Evanston theme: "Christ — the Hope of the World". Referring to the poor in the third world, it said: "We cannot worthily proclaim to men the gospel of the resurrection of the body to eternal life, unless we are at the same time ready to rush to their help in every predicament of body as well as of soul, even to the sacrifice of our own lives." Of course the WCC was still speaking as a body primarily consisting of the churches from the developed western world talking about the underdeveloped part. Following these stimuli the Evanston Assembly underlined the concern of the WCC for a further participation with the churches of the non-western world in their social studies and witness. It is significant that the report of Evanston, Section IV, "Social Questions — Responsible Society in a World Perspective", quotes at length from the findings of the ecumenical study conference, Lucknow (1952).

Rapid Social Change Study, 1955-1961

Pursuing the stimulus of Evanston 1954, the WCC Central Committee at its meeting at Davos in 1955 launched the study on "The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change (a study of the meaning of responsible emancipation)". The study was entrusted to Church and Society (working committee chairman, E. de Vries; secretary, Paul Abrecht) in the Division of Studies (director, Robert Bilheimer). The study had two aims: (1) "to enable Christians and indigenous churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America to make a concerted study, under indigenous leadership, of the new social issues that challenge Christian social thought and action in their areas to clarify the Christian responsibility for political, economic and social life"; and (2) to help Christians and churches of the West "to understand their responsibilities" in relation to the development of new societies in the non-western world. Four topics of study were selected: responsible citizenship, village and rural life, urbanization, impact of foreign enterprise and international assistance. In 1957 the chairman of the Division of Studies reported to the Central Committee that "the study has spread like a bushfire over all continents, with only the exception of the Arctic".[5] As the Asian consultant, I was involved in the total study but with special responsibility for promoting it in Asia. In this essay I am considering only the promotion of the first of the two aims of the study mentioned above, and that only with respect to Asia. In that region the WCC was to be concerned generally

[4]Madras, Christian Literature Society, 1954, p.287.
[5]Quotations from *Minutes* of the Central Committee, Davos 1955, and Yale 1957.

with the promotion of social thinking of the churches throughout Asia; however, it was thought useful to concentrate on India, Indonesia and Japan.

The Christian Institute for the Study of Society (CISS) and the NCC of India jointly sponsored a consultation in Bombay to initiate the Indian part of the Rapid Social Change (RSC) programme. They gathered at Wilson College a group of about forty people including political scientists, economists and sociologists, with a few theologians and church leaders. The consultation was inaugurated by John Mathai, director of the State Bank of India and former finance minister of India, and was chaired by Eddy Asirvatham, head of the Department of Political Science in the University of Nagpur. The theme of the consultation was "A Socialist Pattern of Society", which was accepted officially as the goal of India. The programme was developed by a committee with Paul Devanandan as chairman in consultation with Paul Abrecht, whose office in Geneva also sent to all the participants the booklet *The Statements of the WCC on Social Questions.* W.A. Visser 't Hooft and Robert Mackie of the WCC secretariat and R.B. Manikam from its East Asia secretariat were present and made the ecumenical context real. The consultation planned a three-year study in four areas of Indian life — political, economic, rural and urban. And the Bombay follow-up study programme held a series of consultations throughout India and also brought out several publications on all these subjects by Indian groups, so that in the compilation of the summary volume, *Christian Participation in Nation-Building*,[6] we had twenty-five substantial documents. Paul Abrecht in his own summing-up of the total study on "Rapid Social Change" recognized it as "clearly the most substantial contribution to Christian thinking about rapid social change".[7]

A similar study programme in Japan produced *The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Rapid Social Change in Japan*;[8] and smaller study projects were successfully concluded in Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

A side-effect of the Indian study process was that many scattered Indian Christian study organizations on society and religion came together under the directorship of Paul Devanandan to form the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS). Robert Bilheimer, director of the Study Division of the WCC, was in India for two months "to explore the ethical problems of technical assistance and economic aid". He was an important catalyst, along with Korula Jacob of the NCC of India, in the crystallization of all Christian social and religious studies into the CISRS in 1957. That helped make the Indian study process itself and the contribution of India to ecumenical social thought more effective and substantial. It is rather striking that after New Delhi 1961 the Church and Society working committee had as its moderators three Indians in succession: myself (1961-68), S.L. Parmar (1968-75) and Paulos Mar Gregorios (1975-83). The first two were clearly products of the CISRS.

Paul Abrecht and the RSC study had a decisive impact on the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), now the Christian Conference of Asia, and on

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[6]Eds P. Devanandan and M.M. Thomas, NCCI and CISRS, 1960.
[7]*The Churches and Rapid Social Change*, London, SCM Press, 1961, p.21.
[8]National Council of Churches, 1959.

the development of a body of Asian ecumenical social insights. Even at the meeting of Asian church representatives at Prapat (Indonesia) in March 1957, which mooted the idea of forming an East Asia regional ecumenical council, the WCC was actively present with its concern for the RSC study. Prior to the meeting, an Asian consultation was held in Siantar on the "Social Goals of New Asia". It was convened jointly by A.L. Fransz of the Indonesian NCC and myself as Asian consultant for the RSC study. And following the Prapat meeting the Asia consultation had another session on "The Mission and its Encounter with the Asian Revolution".[9] However, at the inaugural assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference at Kuala Lumpur (1959), the study of social questions had more prominence.

Kuala Lumpur 1959 had a whole section dealing with "Christian Witness in the Midst of Social Change". It was integrated fully with the Rapid Social Change study of the WCC. There was a fear on the part of U Kyaw Than and a few other staff members of the EACC that this integration would hinder its autonomy. But, persuaded by D.T. Niles, Kyaw Than went along and had little cause for regret afterwards, as he found that the arrangement ensured the presence of a large number of expert laymen and women from different parts of Asia at the inaugural assembly; and it also led to the strengthening of the laity committee of the EACC afterwards. Paul Abrecht collaborated most fully in the development of the assembly section on church and society, but in a most self-effacing manner.

The Assembly heard three background addresses on church, religion and social change in Asia: (1) "A New Understanding of the World and the Need of Theological Renewal" by Masao Takenaka, Japan; (2) "Some Notes on a Christian Interpretation of Nationalism in Asia" by myself; and (3) "The Resurgence of Buddhism and the Search for New Foundations" by Pe Maung Tin, Burma. And the section, through corporate thinking in groups, produced a report on "The Witness of the Churches Amidst Social Change". It became the basis of an Asia-wide follow-up study in the churches. The report includes a theological introduction; specific directions on responsibility in political life, problems of economic and social development, renascent religions, and Christian service in the framework of national welfare and development plans; and also suggestions for future study.[10] The Assembly also appointed an EACC Committee on Church and Society (chairperson, A.L. Fransz; secretary, myself) to further the study in the Asian churches in cooperation with the related study committees of the WCC and the International Missionary Council. The programme was to include regional consultations and the stimulation of national consultations; formation and encouragement of national committees on the study of religion and society; and the exchange of ideas and literature for the purpose of formulating a Christian understanding of the movements of our time, of social and religious trends, and dissemination of it among the churches of the area through training institutes, etc.

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[9]See *Social Goals of New Asia: Siantar 1957*, Jakarta, National Council of Churches, 1957, and *The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches in East Asia*, Prapat, Indonesia; Rangoon, East Asia Christian Conference, 1957, pp.81-84.

[10]*Witnesses Together*, ed. Kyaw Than, Rangoon, East Asia Christian Conference.

The theological introduction of the Kuala Lumpur report on Church and Society was perhaps the most important part and was quoted almost in full by Norman Goodall in his book *Ecumenical Progress: a Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961-71.*[11] It provided a framework for Asian churches to interpret the modern forces shaping Asian societies. It speaks of the gospel of Christ as involving "the redemption of the whole human race and the whole created world". As it is "a gospel of the kingship of Christ over the world", the meaning of world history, including that of modern Asian history, is to be discovered in "that kingship which today is hidden and will be revealed at the end of time". It goes on: "The church must endeavour to discern how Christ is at work in the revolutions of contemporary Asia, releasing new creative forces, judging idolatry and false gods, leading peoples to a decision for or against him and gathering to himself those who respond in faith to him in order to send them back into the world to be witnesses to this kingship. The church must not only discern Christ in the changing life, but be there in it, responding to him and making his presence and lordship known... It is our conviction that the church must be a full participant in the new life of Asia if she is to be effective in witnessing to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."

Among several items of the follow-up programme in Asia, perhaps the most significant was the series of study consultations on new forms of service and participation in nation-building in Poona (India), Onyang (Korea), Jaffna (Ceylon), Sukabumi (Indonesia) and Japan under the joint auspices of the EACC committees on interchurch aid for mission and service (secretary, Alan Brash) and church and society.[12] They brought together workers from interchurch service projects and academic lay experts on economics, politics, sociology and religions as well as pastors and theologians to consider new forms of Christian witness in the changing national situations. This body of insights also became a resource for the consultation on interchurch aid held in Hong Kong (organized by Leslie Cooke and Alan Brash). The insights penetrated the service projects of the churches, pushing them in the direction of economic development, structural change for social justice and education for politics.

It was at the Central Committee meeting in Nyborg Strand (Denmark) in 1958 that the Rapid Social Change study team made a detailed report on the whole programme. Besides Paul Abrecht, Egbert de Vries as chairman of the Church and Society working committee, Kofi Busia of Ghana and I were involved in the reporting. I utilized the thinking resulting from the Asian RSC studies in the Alexander Duft lectures delivered in Edinburgh on the *Christian Response to the Asian Revolution.*[13]

The time-bound RSC study worldwide came to a conclusion with the international conference on rapid social change at Thessalonica in July-August 1959.[14]

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[11]London, Oxford University Press, 1972.

[12]Reports: *New Forms of Service and Participation in Society*, Nasrapur, India, 1960; *Christian Witness in Contemporary Ceylon*, Jaffna, Ceylon, 1961; *New Forms of Christian Service and Participation in Korea*, Onyang, 1962; *Christian Service in the Revolution*, Sukabumi, 1962.

[13]London, SCM Press.

[14]Report: *Dilemmas and Opportunities: Christian Action in Rapid Social Change,* Geneva, WCC, 1959.

Reporting on it to the Central Committee, Denys Munby indicated that a beginning had been made there in defining the common Christian responsibility in areas of rapid social change: "In particular, certain theological problems had been clearly analyzed and described, among them the relation of man to nature, the use of the resources of the globe, the significance of economic growth, the new quality of life which that brings and the significance of nationalism and the ideas of the Enlightenment in the areas of rapid social change."[15] And the fuller summing-up came in the form of the book *The Churches and Rapid Social Change* by Paul Abrecht.[16] A more academic contribution by E. de Vries, *Man in Rapid Social Change*[17], accompanied it.

The Third WCC Assembly at New Delhi in 1961 received the report of the RSC study and "noted with great appreciation the progress made in the study of the common Christian responsibility towards areas of rapid social change. This study has dealt with the ethical issues inherent in the social, technical and political change in the new nations. As a result many churches have been stimulated to consider their responsibility for such changes and they are now in search of a deeper understanding of the moral and spiritual issues underlying them. They are becoming increasingly aware that they must participate in the task of defining the choices before their peoples."[18]

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[15]*Minutes*, Central Committee, Rhodes 1959, p.40.
[16]*Op. cit.*
[17]London, SCM Press, 1961.
[18]*The New Delhi Report,* New York, Association Press, 1962, p.176.

The Geneva Conference of 1966 as a Climactic Event

John C. Bennett

The second world conference on Church and Society[1] had as its theme: "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time". I use the word "climactic" to describe it for two reasons. It was the event that marked the greatest participation of the third world up to that time in the life of the ecumenical community. Also, it was the fulfilment of Paul Abrecht's many years of work to bring into the centre of the activities of the World Council of Churches the commitment to social justice on a global basis. He had produced a record of the accomplishments of the Department of Church and Society and of the study on "Rapid Social Change" that he had supervised for many years in his book *The Churches and Rapid Social Change,* published in 1961.[2]

After Geneva and the events immediately following it and influenced by it, including the Fourth Assembly of the World Council in Uppsala in 1968, while Paul Abrecht's concern about issues of social justice continued, he began to emphasize a different cluster of problems, such as the cultural effects of technology, the limits of the world's resources, new ethical issues raised by science. Perhaps we may think of the conference on "Faith, Science and the Future", held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1979, as the climactic event in that second period of his work. It would be hard to exaggerate the extent to which his own competence, imagination, initiative and commitment contributed to the WCC's work on Church and Society during his many years on the staff.

• In part I have drawn on my memory as a member of the conference: I was one of the co-chairmen of Section III. I was helped in writing this article by referring to a chapter I wrote on the subject for the volume edited by Philip D. Morris entitled *Metropolis*, published by Fides Publishers Inc., South Bend, Indiana, in 1970. I have been given permission to use a few passages from that chapter. Chiefly I have been guided by a re-study of the conference reports. There was unusually thorough preparation for the conference. The following four substantial volumes were published as part of this preparation: John C. Bennett, ed., *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*; Z.K. Matthews, ed., *Responsible Government in a Revolutionary Age*; Denys Munby, ed., *Economic Growth in World Perspective*; Egbert de Vries, ed., *Man in Community*; all published by Association Press, New York, and SCM Press, London, in 1966.

[1]The first conference was the Oxford conference on "Church, Community and State" in 1937, held before the establishment of the World Council of Churches but regarded as important background for the WCC's thinking.
[2]London, SCM Press, 1961.

The uniqueness of the conference

The Geneva conference was different from all previous ecumenical conferences. The churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America that belonged to the World Council were represented to an extent that was out of proportion to the size of the churches on those continents. This was a deliberate effort to bring those churches into the mainstream of ecumenical life. The number of church members on those continents may be small, but they represent the needs and aspirations of a larger part of humanity than the churches of Europe and North America. Today, as has not always been the case, Christians speak for their non-Christian neighbours on the issues of social justice. Forty percent of the delegates came from Asia, Africa and Latin America; 16 percent came from Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union; only 30 percent came from Western Europe and North America. This was something new in church history.

Another innovative feature of the conference was that a majority of the delegates were laymen and women. It was recognized that the problems to be discussed were close to the lives of the laity and, generally speaking, they had more first-hand knowledge of them than the clergy. Many of those who were chosen had expertise on the subjects that were discussed. There was quite a sprinkling of economists and of persons related to international financial institutions. The lay delegates also included a number of politicians, especially members of parliaments. A shortcoming pointed out later was that there were few administrative officials who made policy decisions. If we had had officials from foreign offices or defence departments, the mix would have been a bit different.

The eight Roman Catholic observers said that there had never been a meeting in their church that was comparable in terms either of geographical spread or in terms of lay participation.

The chairman of the conference was M.M. Thomas and no one could have better embodied its concerns or its spirit. A layman from India who has been for a generation central in the work of the churches in that country in relating themselves to the task of "nation-building", he supervised a process of fact-finding and cooperative thinking about the problems in his country that were discussed in Geneva. He has been a great prophetic voice from Asia in relating Christian faith and theology to social justice and to the revolutionary needs of Asia for more than a generation. It was a fitting symbol of the truly global nature of the World Council that he later became Moderator of its Central Committee.

There is an important fact about the status of the Geneva conference that should be understood at the outset. It was officially called by the World Council and directed to speak unofficially, to speak for itself and not *for* the Council or *for* the churches which had chosen most of its participants. It was directed to report *to* the WCC and through it to the churches. It received so much publicity that in effect it reported directly to the world. This method was not new, but it is seldom understood by the press. Both the National Council of Churches in the United States and the World Council of Churches have called meetings of various kinds and have directed them to speak for themselves. If a group of people called together and in part financed by the World Council were told that they could only say publicly what had already been said by the World Council or

the churches, it would be completely stultifying. Who would come to such a meeting a second time? Also, how would the churches be confronted with new ideas resulting from cooperative thinking, new ideas that have intrinsic authority and the weight derived from the quality of the group that articulates them? Yet it was this characteristic of the Geneva conference that caused critics to say that it did not represent the people back in the churches. It was a basis for Paul Ramsey's criticisms of the conference in his much discussed book *Who Speaks for the Church?*[3] There should be official assemblies on many levels that have as their function to be representative of the thinking of the churches which send delegates to them. The form and degree of representation depends on the polity of the various churches. But even when these representatives gather, they should have freedom to respond to the new situation that is created when a new mixture of people learn from each other.

It is significant that the Uppsala Assembly, the official decision-making body of the World Council of Churches, meeting two years after Geneva, supported most of the conclusions that came from Geneva. Geneva did the spade work for Uppsala.

I have been surprised to discover how much the reports of the Geneva conference, written eighteen years ago, still speak to us. This will appear as I lift up several of the most important ideas that come to us in the reports. I shall not attempt to summarize the reports, but emphasize ideas that were present in more than one report and that in some cases pervaded the conference. It is very interesting that Prof. Ramsey, in spite of his criticisms, says without any hesitation that the calibre of the reports is astonishingly good.[4]

Before discussing the ideas I want to emphasize, let me list the four sections and their subjects: (I) economic development in a world perspective; (II) the nature and function of the state in a revolutionary age; (III) structures of international cooperation — living together in a pluralistic world society; (IV) man and community in changing societies.

Five major emphases

1. Pervading the whole conference was the realization of the widening gap between rich and poor nations. This was discussed with considerable thoroughness in the first section in which there was a concentration of economic expertise from both the developed and the developing worlds. It was the subject of several platform addresses of which those by Barbara Ward and 'Bola Ige, a young lawyer and student Christian leader from Nigeria, had the greatest effect. Ige's created a storm of argument. There was on all sides a sense of urgency about the responsibility to bridge the gap, and it was strongly suggested that the main obstacle was the lack of political will and not knowledge about how it could be done. There is no doubt that the political will was lacking then and is lacking now, but since then the awareness of the limits of resources has led people to be less optimistic about solving the technical problems in bridging the gap. Section I, which thought chiefly in terms of possible adjustments in existing world

[3]New York and Nashville, Abingdon, 1967.
[4]*Op. cit.*, p.67.

structures if we had the will, called for a transfer of 1-2 percent of the GNP of the developed countries to the developing countries (exclusive of military aid) and stressed international channels of transfer. It spoke of international taxation as something that might well be on the agenda in the future. (This indicates the difference of outlook in the 1960s from that which is dominant in the 1980s, not least in the United States.) The churches were seen to be under an overwhelming religious and moral imperative to overcome world poverty.

I notice that "development" was still a good word and remained so at Uppsala. My first exposure to the rejection of the word and concept of development by many representatives of the so-called "developing nations" came in 1969 when I heard Gustavo Gutierrez read a paper at a small ecumenical conference in which he denounced both in favour of the word and idea of liberation.[5]

2. Probably the most interesting set of ideas that came to the fore in Geneva may be seen in the contrast between, on the one hand, the method and spirit of the first section with its careful and moderate discussion of experts about the means of gradual political and economic change and, on the other hand, talk of revolution involving the displacing of those in power in many situations by illegal and probably violent means. This seemed often to be the issue that aroused most emotion. I wonder if the churches had ever been exposed to as much talk about that form of revolution as was the case at Geneva. A speech by Richard Shaull,[6] a professor at Princeton Seminary who had had missionary experience in Latin America, probably did more than anything else to stimulate this talk of revolution; and the presence of a number of very articulate Latin American delegates kept this issue very much alive. Another factor was the very deeply felt anti-colonialism and the rejection of the structures of the global economy among many third world delegates which was a natural background for this revolutionary thinking. There were times when Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest who in February 1966 had been killed fighting as a guerrilla, was regarded as almost the hero-martyr of the conference.

Readers of the reports will not get the impression that the idea of revolution against the established order was as much emphasized as it was. Yet in the reports of both the second and third sections there are brief discussions that provide justification for it in some situations. Both sections speak of the contrast between covert and overt violence, and both indicate that revolutionary overt violence may at times be the lesser evil in comparison with what Section II called "the violence which, though bloodless, condemns whole populations to perennial despair".[7] Section III said that the "use by Christians of revolutionary methods — by which is meant violent overthrow of an existing political order — cannot be excluded *a priori*".[8] Both sections stress the limitation of violence and give a place to non-violent methods. Section III said what has always been in the minds

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[5]Gutierrez developed this idea more fully in his *A Theology of Liberation*, New York, Orbis Books, 1973.

[6]This speech was along lines similar to his chapter in *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*, John C. Bennett, ed., New York, Association Press, 1966. There were 39 Latin American delegates who as a group had great influence.

[7]*Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time,* report of the world conference on Church and Society, Geneva 1966, Geneva, WCC, 1967, Section II, Par. 84.

[8]*Ibid.,* Section III, Par. 90.

of those in the ecumenical community when they have reluctantly given sanction to the use of violence: "But Christians should think of the day after the revolution, when justice must be established by clear minds and in good conscience".[9]

3. The second section came to some very interesting conclusions and in some cases a lack of conclusions about the problems of establishing or maintaining government, especially in new nations. The range of insights in this report is still of great importance. It is interesting that the co-chairmen were a conservative member of the British parliament and an Indonesian layman of great influence in ecumenical circles who had been a general. There was a difference that pervaded the section between those who believed in the limited state along Anglo-Saxon lines (though not as limited as many conservative leaders in the United States now prefer) and others who believed that the state should have "a more encompassing role".[10] Many of the latter believed in "the nationalizing of the means of production in the framework of central planning as a basis for responsible participation of citizens in political life". Perhaps the most interesting contrast was between those who believed in having a political opposition as part of the structure of government and those who rejected this in the case of nations engaged in nation-building that are threatened by tribal and other long-standing obstacles to national unity. The latter often looked with favour on a one-party system.[11] Also, there were those who looked upon the army as a constructive force for national unity — a strange thought for those who live in western democracies. It would be a surprise to most people in the United States that Christians in an international conference should acknowledge these ideas so frankly.

However, these same people laid the foundation for commitment to a wide range of human rights when they said: "We all attach great importance to the constitutional legal rights of the individuals." How these can be protected by a one-party system that necessarily discourages organization for political dissent raises elementary questions which remained unanswered.

All agreed that political decision-making must be for the benefit of the people and that the "people must participate"[12] in it. They went on to see the difficulties in direct democracy, government by popular referendum. They also raised questions about the role of parliaments and representative government. They did not want to "indulge in the idolatry of experts".[13] They believed that "the few who make decisions should be held accountable to the people". This honest struggle with the difficulties of establishing or maintaining governments which have enough power to be effective without becoming tyrannical is as timely now as it was in 1966.

I think we see in the form this struggle takes the reflection both of the predicaments of those who have had to establish governments without having had much political experience, and also of the fact that Protestantism has not had the growing body of political thought that we see in Catholicism. Catholicism has kept warning against "statism" and has emphasized the princi-

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[9]*Ibid.*, Section III, Par. 90.
[10]*Ibid.*, Section II, Par. 11.
[11]*Ibid.*, Section II, Par. 20.
[12]*Ibid.*, Section II, Par. 21.
[13]*Ibid.*, Section II, Par. 22.

ple of subsidiarity, and in recent years it has come to give support to political democracy and to human rights including religious liberty for all which are related to theological foundations. One of the growing points in Catholic theory is that in spite of the warning against statism there is increasing acceptance of intervention of the state in economic life for the sake of social justice. I do not see in ecumenical Protestantism in addition to definite moral imperatives a growing structure of political thought.

4. There was great interest at Geneva in international relations and in world peace. Much was said about the movement towards economic cooperation in Europe, with European leaders who had participated in it involved in the discussion. The phrase "a passing moment of grace"[14] was used to indicate that the time was favourable for steps towards the creation of new economic institutions in Europe and that this time might never come again. At least the first part of this statement proved to be true. There was more hope in the United Nations as an agent of peace than is present today, though much that was said about the United Nations could become true if hurdles created by the cold war are overcome at some future time. One thing that the report called for has come about: the admission of China to the United Nations. This was still very controversial in some countries, including the United States, and the delegates from Taiwan took action to dissociate themselves from this position.

As we look back upon what was said at Geneva about peace, probably the most important words were about nuclear war. The following statement helped to prepare the way for what is now being said on all sides:

> Christians still differ as to whether military means can be legitimately used to achieve objectives which are necessary to justice. But nuclear war goes beyond all bounds. Mutual nuclear annihilation can never establish justice because it destroys all that justice seeks to defend or to achieve. We now say to all governments and peoples that nuclear war is against God's will and the greatest of evils. Therefore we affirm that it is the first duty of governments and their officials to prevent nuclear war.[15]

This statement was ahead of its time. In the United States and among its western European allies the majority view still was that the first duty of governments was to prevent the spread of communism. In 1966 less was known than is known now about the indirect and long-term effects of nuclear war both upon people and upon the global environment. Two years later the same words about the first duty of governments were repeated by the Uppsala Assembly.[16] Today they would be more widely supported than ever before. It is certainly implied in the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace of the American Roman Catholic bishops, which has changed the nature of the discussion on nuclear weapons and nuclear war in the United States.

The conference met during the early years of the Vietnam War; 1966 was early in so far as the development of broad opposition to the war in the United States was concerned. The National Council of Churches was ahead of most of the churches in its criticism of American policy. Unofficial religious movements opposing the war were being formed at about that time. The Geneva conference

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[14]*Ibid.*, Section III, Par. 17.
[15]*Ibid.*, Section III, Par. 7.
[16]*The Uppsala Report 1968*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, Section IV, Par. 11.

debated the issue. After the appointment of a special committee to bring in a recommendation on the subject, one of the strongest early condemnations by a significant religious body of the policy of the United States in Vietnam came from the conference. It said the following:

> However, the massive and growing American military presence in Vietnam and the long-continued bombing of villages in the south and of targets a few miles from cities in the north cannot be justified. They involve the danger of escalation of the war into a world conflict, and do not bring South Vietnam closer to political stability or solve the problems which have produced a revolutionary situation in that country.[17]

Sometimes the Americans present met as a group, and it was noticeable that most of them agreed with this statement. One of the main reasons for Paul Ramsey's criticism of the conference in the book to which I have referred was that he believed, quite correctly at that time, that the statement did not reflect the view of the majority of the members of the churches in the United States. Also he was personally opposed to it. Two years later the Uppsala Assembly adopted an even stronger statement about American policy in Vietnam.

5. Geneva lifted up the issue of racial justice, especially in connection with African issues, in both the third and fourth sections. The Rhodesian situation was debated in a plenary session, as was Vietnam. Some British delegates felt that what was said was unfair to the British efforts to find a solution in that situation. While the conference was in session the World Court published a decision that was favourable to South Africa in its relation to South West Africa; this was a great shock, and the decision was denounced in reports by both sections. The racial conflicts in the United States were dramatized by the fact that Martin Luther King, Jr, who was scheduled to preach a sermon, was compelled to remain in the United States because of his involvement in a racial conflict in Chicago, but the conference heard his sermon since a film of it was flown to Geneva the previous night. The discussion of racism helped to prepare the way for greater emphasis on the subject in the Uppsala Assembly, which took action that led to more importance being given to the subject in the programme of the World Council, leading to the Nottingham conference in 1969 and to the action of the Central Committee in the same year in establishing the Programme to Combat Racism. From this Programme have come the many grants to liberation movements around the world which have always caused great controversy. They were actions rather than words.

Technological and cultural change

The general theme of the conference was announced as "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time". I think that it would be fair to say that most of the emphasis was on economic and political revolutions. The fourth section on "Man and Community in Changing Societies" put considerable stress on the cultural effects of technological change. In this respect it was a point of contact with the new emphases of the World Council in the years especially after 1970, which were reflected by the conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" of 1979.

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[17] *Ibid.*, Section III, Par. 24.

This Section must have been one of the most exciting of the sections, even if it lifted up fewer issues that led to conclusions that became part of the mind of the conference. Its co-chair persons, Margaret Mead and André Dumas, were very dynamic leaders. And it did a great deal to prepare for the future agenda of the World Council of Churches.

The section discussed in very preliminary terms the relations between men and women. The very name of the section that used *man* as the generic term of humanity indicates that it was in the early stages of that discussion![18] It discussed the conflict between generations. It raised the question of the relation between the growth of population and development.

In doing this it alluded very cautiously to the issue of birth control. It noted religious differences on methods of birth control but came much nearer than Section I, which also touched on the subject, to giving support to the development of methods of contraception. Since the publication of the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, which repeated the traditional condemnation of the use of contraceptives, the debate within the Catholic Church has heightened, with a large part of the laity and most theologians opposing the official position. A consequence is probably a greater freedom to speak in ecumenical conferences on the subject.

[18]The fact that this conference belongs to the early stages of the discussion of the role of women is also evident from the statistics: out of the 337 delegates only 27 were women!

The Church and Society Explosion in Latin America

Luis E. Odell

In retrospect, the 1940s and 1950s were decidedly a period of great ferment in terms of the development of the socio-political consciousness of the Latin Americans. Events such as World War II and the following process of decolonization in Asia and Afria, as well as the popular movements in Brazil and Argentina under Getulio Vargas and Juan D. Peron respectively, were decisive elements in the attainment of the "conscientization" of the people. The culmination of this period of ferment was the Cuban revolution in 1959, which profoundly shook great sectors of society, such as the progressive intellectuals, students and workers — both rural and urban — and likewise, young people within Catholicism and Protestantism.

In this situation, which we can characterize as "convulsive", a new social consciousness erupted in Protestant ecumenical circles, especially in Brazil and the River Plate area. This was in large measure a consequence of the study on "The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid Social Change", initiated by the World Council of Churches in 1955 and led by its Church and Society Department under Paul Abrecht. The new conscience was reflected in a broad gamut of responses, ranging from a new interest in the social service programmes of the church and, therefore, the individual responsibility of Christians, to the support for and participation in the revolution that was beginning to take shape as the only solution for the grave problems affecting the continent and whose paradigm was the above-mentioned Cuban revolution.

As an introduction to what will follow, we should say that some twenty years before, Protestant youth — faithful to their vocation of being in the vanguard of many aspects of Christian work and witness — had expressed their concern about Christian social responsibility. Already in the 1930s heated debates were held at national and regional youth conferences about subjects such as the social action of the church and individual participation in politics. The most outstanding example is that of the First Latin American Protestant Youth Congress in Lima, Peru, in February 1941. This important gathering — meeting under the general theme "With Christ, a New World" — gave attention in its various sections and groups to "the position of young people in today's world from the social, economic, political and racial standpoints". Likewise, for the first time in a meeting of this type the problem of the indigenous population was dealt with — a subject that forty years later is still relevant.

Two years after this significant event, the Protestant youth of Argentina and Uruguay held their third conference on the general theme of "Christian Youth in the Post-War World", thus engaging in a praiseworthy attempt to discern and delineate their role in the society that would emerge after a war that had not yet ended. It is a fact worth mentioning that in the same year Argentina was the scene of a coup d'état which led later to Peronism, creating a situation of change and instability that still exists.

In 1946, with the war scarcely over, the same youth, picking up on a social concern that was a burning issue at that moment and has not lost that relevance in the years since, gathered in Havana, Cuba, at the Second Latin American Youth Congress, under the theme "Christian Youth and Freedom". In the interim those young people had created and set in motion the first continent-wide ecumenical organism, the Latin American Union of Protestant Youth (Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Evangélicas, ULAJE). Here we should also mention the vital role played by the Student Christian Movement (Movimiento Estudiantil Cristiano-MEC), related to the World Student Christian Federation, which by means of publications, leadership training and study programmes made a very important contribution to the dissemination and promotion of these concerns in the student world.

In this context, a group of lay Christians — who had been leaders in the Latin American youth movement — took an active interest in applying to the region the Rapid Social Change study. In order to promote a relevant reflection about that focus and concern, they initiated in 1959 in Montevideo the publication of a bulletin entitled *Church and Society in Latin America,* which aroused much interest and response, achieving in a short time a wide distribution.

In answer to that interest and with the enthusiastic support of Paul Abrecht, an invitation was issued for a consultation in Huampani, near Lima, in the middle of 1961. The conclusions were published in a book entitled *Encounter and Challenge,*[1] which was widely circulated throughout the continent.

In a desire not to limit itself to the theoretical consideration of the concerns which motivated the gathering, the consultation recommended the creation of a continuing organization to carry forward the task begun by and the recommendations that issued from the consultation. Perhaps thanks to the experience already acquired in the youth movements, in a very short time the Church and Society Movement in Latin America (Movimiento Iglesia y Sociedad en America Latina — ISAL) was organized in Sao Paulo, Brazil, February 1962. The movement quite easily obtained the affiliation and support of the national commissions of Church and Society already in existence and those that ISAL helped to create, including those in the following countries: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. ISAL constituted the second movement of truly ecumenical character in Latin America (the first being ULAJE). It also played an important role, by direct and effective participation, in the efforts to bring to fruition a similar movement at the level of the churches, which was achieved with the creation of the Movement for Latin American Protestant Unity (Movimiento Pro-

[1]*Christians and Social Change in Latin America*, Geneva, WCC, 1961.

Unidad Evangélica Latinoamericana — UNELAM). Twenty years later, in November 1982, this movement was consolidated with the creation of the Latin American Council of Churches (Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias — CLAI). The creation of ISAL represented the only instance in the world in which the Rapid Social Change study was translated into an ecumenical organization of a regional character with its own identity, exercising a transcendental influence in the Protestant world and making an impact in the Catholic context as well.

Biblical-theological bases

Let us look now at the biblical/theological bases which — as a result of the Huampani consultation — constituted the foundation for and orienting principles of the work of this singular movement.

From its very beginning ISAL strove to ground its action in an honest search for what the word of God had to say about Christian social responsibility. In all the conferences and training institutes that were held, the core of the programme expressed that concern which had been defined and spelled out in the Huampani meeting in the following fashion:

— Every form of Christian action is based on a fundamental and primordial conviction, namely that God is present in history, in every concrete historical situation. This is the biblical faith that moved the prophets of Israel; it is the profound meaning in the central event of Christianity, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.
— When a Christian recognizes the lordship of Jesus Christ in history, he or she ought to insist that this lordship is not one of abstract, "spiritual" meaning, but rather a matter of his presence here and now in an unconditional way. God is present and acts even in "the valley of the shadow of death".
— This certainty does not simplify the task of the church. God acts, but the events of history are not so clear and transparent as to permit the immediate and direct discernment of the direction of the divine action. Therefore, the church must be constantly alert and responsive to historical events in order to discover in the course of them, in prayer and in contact with the word, the direction in which God is moving within human history.

The bases of Christian service

In 1963, ISAL saw the need for a consultation on the subject of Christian social service and social action, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There, in a highly significant effort, the bases for Christian action in that important area were formulated. From the final statement of the meeting, certain concepts and criteria deserve to be highlighted for attention, because they provided the necessary orientation of ISAL's task ahead. For example:

> As we reflect on the nature and mission of the church we must affirm that the church exists to serve, and that the complexity of the events and problems of society cannot be an excuse for the fulfilment of its vocation. The church ought to recognize that its testimony by means of "service to the neighbour" — that is, *diakonia* — constitutes one of the dimensions of the proclamation of the gospel along with the example that it offers to the world of a Christian community which lives in a harmonious communion of love.

In an attempt to define the dimensions of the ministry of service/action in today's world, the following convictions were stated:

> The only attitude acceptable to God in the fulfilment of the diaconal ministry is that which is expressed in the words of our Lord: "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27).
>
> For this ministry to be authentic it must involve in some fashion the self-denial and sacrifice of the one who carries it out. This "style" or condition is not transferable and ought to be assumed fully by the person or the community which engages in the ministry of service.
>
> In comprehending and accepting this responsibility the church of Latin America will discover unsuspected resources — in its own membership and within its own countries — that will permit it to verify the words of the apostle, "as poor but enriching many".
>
> In the Latin American situation — in which detachment, self-denial and sacrifice are required of the whole society as an unavoidable condition for development — the Protestant churches must give an even more vital example by demonstrating their willingness to accept those requisites.

Nature and purpose of the movement

ISAL was the result of the awakening conscience on the part of diverse groups within Latin American Protestantism with respect to the existence of a new reality which was experienced beginning about 1960. A continent was shaken to its very foundations by the awakening of the masses who — dispossessed, hungry and illiterate — were gradually comprehending the real causes of their permanent misery and suffering, and were resolving, therefore, not to permit that situation to continue indefinitely. ISAL was also a product of the response which those same groups sought to give to that situation challenging the church to adapt its thought and action, its life and mission, to the rhythm of the transformations experienced by the society which it was called to serve.

Up to the middle of the century the churches were for the most part fundamentally concerned with their own growth and consolidation; they were largely "turned inward", self-absorbed. That situation —understandable due to the difficulties and obstacles that impeded the basic evangelizing mission — resulted in insufficient attention being given to the social process that was taking place, and to the demands which that process and the contextual reality were making on the church.

In this context the appearance of a movement that sought to make the Protestant conscience more acutely aware of its social responsibility — pointing out the fallacy of the church-world dichotomy to which the churches were accustomed — was not only necessary but urgent.

Action and presence

It is not necessary to describe the methods and initiatives which ISAL utilized in its effort to carry out its purposes, particularly in the first ten years of its existence. It does, however, seem appropriate to mention a few noteworthy features which guided that action and which we shall summarize in what follows:

a) The prophetic mission of the church

A second consultation of ISAL was held in El Tabo, Chile, in 1966, a few months before the world conference on church and society — a conference in which the Latin American delegation played a surprisingly prominent role. In the El Tabo consultation it was said, among other things, that the churches should:

— provide an interpretation of the historical juncture in which we live in the light of God's purpose;
— reaffirm the sovereignty of God over the totality of life and all human relationships;
— proclaim the relativity and precariousness of all political, economic and social structures even though these propose to serve human beings;
— serve as voice for and defender of the poor, of those who are the victims of injustice due to the prevailing social order, thus expressing the personal interest of God in them.

ISAL was one of the first to focus on the subject of the poor and the urgency of their liberation, a theme which years later was to become dominant in theology and in the evangelizing missionary action both of Protestants and Catholics — a fact that has been confirmed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Puebla, Mexico, in 1978 and the World Council of Churches' conference on mission and evangelism in Melbourne, Australia, in 1980.

b) Violence and non-violence in the process of rapid social change

An original contribution of ISAL has been that it called attention to the fact that in the liberation struggles and social conflicts in general, the violence that so much concerns persons in authority and Christians is not only that which is expressed in the smashing of plate glass windows, the burning of cars or even the killing of innocent people, but also the other kind, more extensive and tragic, known as invisible violence: the latent, moral, psychological violence to which nations and persons almost everywhere and at all social levels are subjected. It is the violence that day after day kills, by hunger and disease, thousands of children and adults, and which deprives millions of the opportunity of a life of dignity, with the full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights.

On this subject, the El Tabo consultation emphasized the importance of the ambiguous nature of all action, both violent and non-violent, affirming that "whether we choose the former in order to be effective at a given moment or choose the latter in order to maintain our purity, we are equally guilty before God".

c) Political action and structural transformation

Another important contribution was the assertion that the participation of Christians in politics ought to be encouraged and supported by the church and not considered as something immoral, even though at the heart of political activity there is much to be condemned and corrected. This basic principle is related to another conviction, namely that the only way in which a violent, bloody revolution can be avoided is by means of the rapid and profound transformation of the existing socio-economic structures. The truth and urgency of that conviction is rooted in the fact that in the whole context of the so-called "western, Christian

civilization", those structures maintain a system of increasing exploitation, which at the same time is extended to the "developing" world by means of the nefarious action of the multinational corporations. Obviously, that transformation ought to lead towards the creation of truly democratic societies in which genuine freedom is permitted to flourish and there is a full respect for and observance of the basic human rights. This means the recognition and acceptance of the fact that in Latin America, and in many other regions as well, *agape* is expressed through political/social commitment and the practice of liberating action in its broadest and most inclusive sense.

Conclusion

Given the circumstances in which the concept of revolution was spreading over all of Latin America, creating a tinder-box situation, the experience of ISAL manifested itself in a providential way.

We say so because that very fact made it possible for the church of Jesus Christ in our continent at least to adopt a more understanding attitude towards a process that, although cruelly halted in the 1970s in most of the countries, nevertheless continues to be the ferment among the growing masses of dispossessed. This desire might be called more correctly a hope that a new day will soon arrive, as prophesied in the message of Jeremiah (22:3), a day in which the word of the Lord will be heard again, the word that will affirm the reign of justice and righteousness. For the oppressed, the strangers, the widows and the orphans, for all the poor and alienated, that will mean liberation from exploitation, the end of humiliating mistreatment and even of death. It will be the fulfilment of the promise of our Teacher and Lord — a trustworthy promise that he has overcome the world. So be it!

Sodepax: an Ecumenical Dialogue

Philip Land, S.J.

Sodepax, now delivered to the slumber chambers, when at its most vigorous was an important, vital and viable ecumenical force. Exploration of that truth I leave to others. I limit myself to comment on a more modest yet significant theme. This is that Sodepax represented an unusual dialogic process into which entered Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic. All three drew directly from their own traditions, Catholics most notably from Vatican II. Protestants drew considerably on Amsterdam's "the responsible society", but more still on the more revolutionary formula of the 1966 Geneva world conference on church and society. Orthodox too had their sources.

All three meshed these individual streams in the mix of Sodepax, while retaining the separate streams of their respective traditions. Shortly, a new ecumenical force entered into the dialogic process. This was the World Council of Churches' Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD), created at Uppsala in the summer of 1968. CCPD for several years was, on the Geneva side, the sole companion in Sodepax to the Vatican's Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace. CCPD in meetings of its own drew up more radical statements than those emerging early in Sodepax. Its influence was welcomed by Fr George Dunne, S.J., first secretary general to Sodepax, and his very progressive co-workers, especially Roy Neehall and Charles Elliott. That progressivism was less noticeable on the Vatican side of Sodepax.

To make our point about the singularly dialogic process within Sodepax and swirling around in its environs, it is worth stepping back to catch a couple of moments of the process. The first is the very early-on trilogy of conferences on development: Beirut (1968), Montreal (May 1969) and Cartigny, Switzerland (November 1969). The other moment jumps forward to 1976 with the last major Sodepax project, "In Search of a New Society".

The early stages

Beirut announced itself as "major Christian churches of the world launching a programme in support of world cooperation for development". Paul Abrecht was very active in the preparation of Beirut (as well as of the other two early conferences on development). The riches of developments within Church and Society were thus entered into the dialogic process, together with the director's personal gifts of wisdom, sagacity and openness. He was also a very active member of Sodepax's board.

Mention of Abrecht brings to mind another Protestant-side entry into the dialogic process. This was the 1966 world conference on church and society. If Catholics in general could not be said to have been very aware of the Geneva con-

ference, this cannot be said of Catholic participants in the Beirut conference. Three at least had taken an active part in the Geneva conference. Others had read the preliminary four volumes of papers and followed the final report.

Catholic background to Beirut included several sources. These were known to the Protestant participants. They were Pope John XXIII's major encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961, with a strong section on development, and his 1963 *Pacem in Terris*. There was also his successor Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, completely devoted to the problems of development and their solution.

That encyclical had two other links to Sodepax (via the Commission Justice and Peace): first of all, it called for creation of the Commission; secondly, in the decree that canonically established the Commission the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* was declared to be the Commission's Magna Charta.

But most influential of all was the decree of the Second Vatican Council on *The Church in the Contemporary World* (1965). In a paper I prepared for the conference I expressed my appreciation that the Council had put the Catholic Church more firmly in the world and had recognized that the kingdom of the Lord is not one just of time-beyond-time, but also of the here and now — a kingdom of justice, peace and love. I quoted: "Appointed Lord... Christ is now at work... arousing not only a desire for the age to come, but by that very fact animating, purifying and strengthening those noble longings too by which the human family makes its life more human...." With the Council I drew the conclusion: "Far from thinking that works produced by our own talent and energy are in opposition to God's power... (they) are the flowering of his own mysterious design..."

Preparations for Beirut were already under way before the arrival of Fr Dunne. These were mainly concerned with its content. Prominent at that stage of the process were the two co-chairpersons, Max Kohnstamm for the World Council of Churches and Msgr Joseph Gremillion for the Vatican. Chairing the content committee was the future Nobel Laureate, Jan Tinbergen. I was secretary to that *ad hoc* committee.

It was inevitable, given the composition of the committee, that the economic content of Beirut would not be given a very radical slant. And it wasn't. An impressive paper on world development by Irving Friedman, the senior economist of the World Bank, was contributed. Another came from still another Nobel Laureate, Sir Arthur Lewis. Among the eminent names drawn to the conference were Barbara Ward, famed author of numerous books on development; André Philip, then director of the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; Maurice Strong, then director-general of the External Aid Office of Canada; Auguste Vanistendael, then secretary-general of International Cooperation for Socio-Economic Development; and Samuel Parmar, one of the most vital forces in the ecumenical debate.

The conference report dwelt at length in prescriptions for development, using pretty much main-line thinking. Its 20-page "Strategy of Development" included the following: (1) growth of GNP; (2) the industrial states of the north providing the model; (3) maximum attention to saving for capital investment; (4) a lead role for elites; and (5) reliance on trade to bring in the dollars required for development. On the part of the richer, developed countries the following were required: (1) wider opening of markets; (2) transfer of technology; (3) more

private investment towards third world capital formation; (4) more generous transfers in the form of loans at better terms and more straight-out gifts.

A symbol of this developmental mentality (and contributor to it) was the presence at Beirut of top representatives of at least ten United Nations organizations. They sought to be present because they held the common conviction that somehow the churches could contribute to development and make their work easier. They found opportunity frequently to assure the churches of their cooperation and of funnelling money through them because the local churches could use it so much more intelligently and economically than UN experts. If the UN system has ever lived up to the promises then made (and on other subsequent occasions repeated), it has missed this writer.

Discussion of development inevitably led to the question of population growth. The conference took the position that a too rapid population growth could be an obstacle to development. This had inevitable implications for family planning. It would be three more months before *Humanae Vitae* appeared, but the Vatican's opposition to contraceptives was already known. It was reported back to the Vatican (not by any of the members of the Commission Justice and Peace present) that the Protestants there had tried to ramrod through a policy of unacceptable family planning. This is grossly untrue. The WCC people present bent over backwards to be accommodating, to make it easy for the Catholics present, especially those of the Vatican's Commission.

We must return in a moment to speak of the reactions to the development programme of Beirut. But first let us turn to its theological side, for — it must be remembered — Beirut was much more concerned with the churches' role in development. Was anything of use said on this?

The final report asserts that in coming to conclusions about the churches' role, Beirut had relied on the encyclical of Pope Paul VI on *Progress of Peoples* and the WCC conference on church and society, Geneva, 1966. This is surely right. But as noted earlier, Catholics there present relied heavily on the decrees of Vatican II, especially that on *The Church in the Contemporary World*. This was certainly so of the reflections I contributed on theology and development. I lived in Rome from 1955 to 1975 and spanned the years of preparation for Vatican II and the actual council. I made my own the theology I there learned, and I brought it into Beirut. The kind of theology of the church in the world I derived therefrom I have already indicated with an opening quotation from that decree.

Parenthetically that theology was too much for at least one of the participants who had been invited to respond to me. My theology he found to be neo-Pelagian, too worldly, too horizontal, triumphalistic, optimistic. It was not the first time I had heard this view, for at the Gregorian University, Rome, I had heard Karl Barth make some of the same charges about the decree *The Church in the Contemporary World*.

I think it is fair to say that despite these charges the statement on the church and development emerging from Beirut was certainly at least not alien to the Council's theology, but embracing also, as it did, Protestant and Orthodox ideas.

Here is some of the language of the report: "God speaks to us in the demands of the needy" (appeal was made to the Jewish Testament and to the New Testa-

ment). "God wants the world to develop." Recognition was given of our Christian responsibility for "political and economic structures that bring about poverty and injustice". An enthusiastic call ensued for "adventure of cooperation for development of the earth for all". Dare we hope? "Our hopes are justified because they are God's hopes." But "we are under the judgment of God". Why? Because we have been content to give charity and not work for justice.

And echoing Vatican II, "we dare think that when we play our part in this work what we do is part of God's continuing creativity in our world as part of his plan for men". "God", the report concludes, "is at work in the development that is taking place." My memory reverts at this point to another parenthetic remark, illustrative, however, of the dialogic process then moving. A prominent participant in the Fourth Assembly of the WCC in the summer of 1968 told me that the Assembly had quite self-consciously sought to improve on the Beirut formula of the church's responsibility for a just society but had failed to come up with anything better.

Challenge to Beirut — Montreal, 1969

In the late summer of 1969 the Beirut report together with the conference papers was published by Corpus Books of New York. Ironically, publication came at the moment in which the report with respect to its "strategy of development" was receiving sharp challenge from several quarters. This began within the Sodepax secretariat itself as well as within the Commission Justice and Peace. Some others of the Beirut conference like Richard Dickinson expressed misgivings. More vociferous criticism came (to me as well as to others) from friends and associates in Latin America. Some of these were at the very moment helping to prepare what would prove to be a major statement on justice by the Catholic community. This was the September 1968 statement issued at Medellin, Colombia, by the Catholic hierarchies of all Latin America. Medellin was immensely influential in the Catholic world (and Protestant world, at least, of Latin America). One of its major fruits was the statement of the 1971 synod of Catholic bishops, called "Justice in the World". "The doing of justice", said that synod, "is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel."

The specifics of the charge by all these sources is precisely the line of the Beirut strategy, delineated earlier in this essay. Representative of WCC's questioning of the Beirut formula is their own statement at Uppsala in that summer of 1968 in their report "World Economic and Social Development" with its call for "concern for revolutionary struggle for structural change".

Sodepax staff quickly arrived at the decision to convoke another ecumenical conference to reflect anew on the theme of development. It was decided to have no papers beyond a few pages reviewing reaction to Beirut. I authored one of those reports. Care was given to have an adequate representation of those who had been at Beirut, but to add new and different voices, especially third world voices.

The results were startlingly different and gained wide approval. One or two passages must suffice to give the flavour of the Montreal report. "The domination of the underdeveloped countries by the developed...makes necessary the confrontation between those without power and those with power... This is the

essence of the work of Sodepax." An appropriate process for Sodepax's task would involve enlarging the role and voice of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Towards this end Sodepax should establish a working group "with a majority of two-thirds world representation..."

Theology of development — Cartigny, 1969

One recommendation coming out of Montreal was the call for continuing theological reflection in view of "the short-fall of our grasp on the relationship between our technical understanding of development and our theological awareness". But independently of Montreal, Sodepax had already begun work on such theological reflection. As one step it commissioned a student of mine at the Gregorian to undertake a six-months' study of bibliographical resources in several languages. There resulted a volume containing over two thousand titles — witness to the growing interest in the subject.

A decision was reached to hold a major interfaith and intercultural consultation on "theology and development". Its site would be Cartigny, Switzerland. This was held in November of the year that saw Montreal. Cartigny was far and away more methodological than thematic. We need not report that conference except to say that its volume of 200 pages contains rich reflections, still valid today. Gustavo Gutierrez was a member of the conference. In autographing his gift copy to me, he affirmed that his book, *A Theology of Liberation*,[1] grew out of the long paper he did for Cartigny.

Our focal point, however, remains the dialogic character of these Sodepax conferences. As one more example, John Bennett, who chaired the meeting, remarked to the assembly that he had come supposing that there would be division along confessional lines. He added that quite to the contrary Catholics joined Protestants on either end of the spectrum of conservatives and liberals.

The title of the conference, "Theology and Development", did not go unchallenged. Some third world people present insisted that it should more properly be entitled "theology and liberation". Others, not insensible to this claim, felt that development was equally a theme of theological contemplation. They argued, if memory serves me rightly, that the conference title could stand tentatively as embracing both themes.

Before moving to the second major moment in the Sodepax dialogic process, it is worth pausing to note a couple of minor elements that span the fifteen years of Sodepax life.

First, Roman Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards change. The Roman Catholic tendency was — and is — to put highest priority on harmony, stability, order. Class struggle of almost any sort was seen as evil. If change must come, then let it be managed by authority and kept to the incremental. It is true that *Progress of Peoples* allows for revolution where it represents the last resort in an absolutely intolerable situation. But even Paul VI, author of that statement, appeared to have drawn back from it subsequently. And certainly his present successor strongly opposes revolution in general. Protestant colleagues were much more able to see change, even violent change, as possibly creative: I recall

[1]New York, Orbis Books, 1973.

Parmar saying at a meeting that development is disorder, i.e. the existing order is established injustice and must be overthrown. Disorder must break into that evil order. We must embrace radical alternatives in values and structures.

The second minor theme was once stated by the Rev. Theo Tschuy, then associate-director of Sodepax. He maintained that Catholics tended to proceed deductively and Protestants inductively. There is a very large dose of truth in that. It would be less true, however, of Catholics who adhere to the theology of Vatican II, for that is in method incarnational, listening to the voices of the poor and oppressed, careful to read "the signs of the times".

Sodepax's "search for a new society"

We leap forward some five years to pick up our second major moment of the dialogue. This is May of 1976. Sodepax had already been reduced to its two directors. These two carried forward a programme that had been in the planning through several months of the preceding year. To it they gave the name "In Search of a New Society". Its subtitle was: "Christian Participation in the Building of New Relations Among Peoples".

The economic section of the programme focused on: (1) the New International Economic Order; (2) poverty and participation; and (3) sustainability. The poverty mentioned in (2) was linked to the NIEO theme inasmuch as the poor referred to in (2) were victims of injustices of the existing international order. In discerning the causes of this injustice and poverty (without which discernment Sodepax saw no possibility of their eradication) the programme demanded listening to the poor as well as their active participation in breaking the fetters that bound them. This was viewed as one form of self-reliance, but other forms of participation by the poor were enumerated.

Our attention focuses on the statement, not the success of the programme, which was small if not indifferent. We focus on that statement because it relates dialogically with a formula then current (and still today if in slightly different form) in WCC circles. In original form the statement was the trilogy, first announced by Parmar at a Montreux, Switzerland, conference of 1970. Parmar's formula was: economic development, social justice and self-reliance. By the time the Sodepax programme was announced the CCPD formula had been shifted somewhat to read "towards a just, participatory and sustainable society". If we can substitute for "just" Sodepax's "NIEO" then the two formulas are fair equivalents. The influence of CCPD's powerful metaphor on Sodepax seems clear from internal evidence. But I can attest real influence upon myself as an active partner in preparing the Sodepax formula and upon others of Sodepax who were following closely developments within CCPD.

Still another element entered into ecumenical dialogue. This was the option for the poor. From CCPD's side it was born of the Nairobi Assembly of 1975. A year after announcement of the Sodepax programme, which embraced this element of justice for the poor, CCPD published the first of three volumes on the underprivileged, Julio de Santa Ana's *Good News to the Poor*. From the Catholic side such an option was deeply embedded in Medellin, already referred to. It is also in "Justice in the World", also referred to above. In addition, many religious congregations had incorporated that option into renewal of their constitutions.

Concluding comments

I have only two comments with which to end this essay. They concern things I don't find or don't find adequately incorporated into the formulas of either CCPD or Sodepax. The first is the call for productivity and economic development, originally in the Parmar statement but abandoned. There is, however, re-entry in a Zurich consultation of 1979 — though I have not yet, even in the Zurich report, seen that idea given place of honour alongside the established trilogy.

The second element missing for me in both is the *communitarian*. Here is a powerful metaphor with roots in the Jewish Testament as Covenant and in the New Testament as primitive post-Easter communities sharing all things in common. Some elements of commonality are present in the two formulas under review, notions such as the common destination of resources by their Creator, of the common good, and of common goods held jointly by the participating community, shared together in common stewardship with common basic needs.

But commonality of dwelling and production get short shrift, if I am not mistaken. Common dwelling — to possess dwelling space together. Habitat as the where of a *people*. The city known as *shalom*.

And community *enterprise*. Cooperatives and credit unions, kibutzes and "backyard revolutions". The return to people locally of as much enterprise as possible. Industrial democracy — workers' control of their workplace, as perhaps in Yugoslavia, at least in principle. An end to the never-ending commercialization of economic activity and the return to local communities of as much as possible.

I have one final comment to make upon this reflection of years of shared ideas, love and friendship. This concerns the essential theology of Sodepax. Sodepax did not exist to *promote Christian unity*. What was it then? It was a joint effort of Christian churches to promote the *humanization of life* in justice, peace and love.

Church unity in fact was existent in that experiment even though not its direct goal. Everyone in the Sodepax experience believed in and prayed for church unity. But they did not (or so it seemed to me from many conversations on this topic) envision the project as that of directly promoting church unity. In a sense the project presupposed some degree of church unity already existent. Both parent bodies, so I understand it, believed that Sodepax existed to contribute to the embodiment of the Lord's reign in the world. Some might see this as only one more confirmation of a formula heard within WCC discussions to the effect that "doctrine divides, service unites". The only qualification in the Sodepax history is that in Sodepax there was also a large measure of doctrinal unity.

The World of Business and the Church

Léon de Rosen

How did it all come about?

I was, in 1964, the chairman of an industrial company when I was elected President of UNIAPAC, the International Christian Union of Business Executives. UNIAPAC, at that time, federated national unions of Catholic business executives. Since then, it has become ecumenical, including business executives of other Christian denominations.

The aim of UNIAPAC is to give witness that modern humanity needs more than ever spiritual convictions which it should not hide under bushels, that economic efficiency and self-fulfilment must and can strike a balance, and that business leaders are fully aware of their responsibilities towards society and the church. The main source of inspiration of UNIAPAC is the Christian social doctrine, faithfulness to which means a recurrent effort to grasp its fundamental principles, a continued research in order to derive such expressions and applications as are required by our times, and an active will as well as imagination to implement it.

When I took over UNIAPAC, two major facts struck me as requiring study and appropriate action. One was the absence of communication between the Christian churches and the business world. I could not but note with anxiety the reticence with which the churches considered the economic world — and more particularly the transnational companies — whilst the business community amply criticized the churches' lack of understanding of economic constraints.

The other was the lack of dialogue within the churches and within the business world between Christians of different denominations. On the Catholic side, for instance, there was a widespread belief that, within Protestant and Orthodox constituencies, a Christian social doctrine was virtually non-existent.

I might add that my father was Protestant, my mother Orthodox. After having been dutifully raised in the Orthodox religion by my admirable mother, I later, by my own free choice, became a Catholic. This change has always been, in my conscience, comforted by my knowledge of the specific riches of Protestant and Orthodox religions as well as by my will to contribute, to the extent possible, to the furthering of a mutual understanding and enrichment between the three Christian religions, with unity as a most desirable, even if remote, goal (just as parallel lines seen at the horizon are but one).

Conversations and cooperation

It was in this frame of mind that I visited, in Geneva, Paul Abrecht, Executive Secretary, Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. From this first meeting onwards, we developed a mutual confidence and a true friendship. We found that, whatever the differences in our respective creeds, we had much in common that would constitute the very basis of a continued collaboration. Indeed, under Paul Abrecht, the Department on Church and Society has opened social thinking to new concerns, challenging many of the assumptions and positions of the past, particularly theology and revolution, the meaning of the human, social issues and world economic development. These activities ran parallel to the initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church. They have had a substantial impact on the church's approach to the problems of people in modern society, widening it to embrace the concerns of young nations, relating it to Roman Catholic thought, initiating dialogue with other groups and social ideologies, and drawing upon previously unutilized talents and insights within the WCC. This has meant a fresh consideration of Christian responsibility in society and has helped ensure the integrity of the church in Christian declarations on social questions.

An ecumenical concern became the root of our collaboration. In a way, UNIAPAC was freer for radical involvement or experimentation, thus stimulating the churches. Where study groups would function in more than one denomination, they would establish important ecumenical bridges, speaking on social issues, thus stimulating new thinking and formulations on the part of the official church bodies.

Similarly, study groups and full-fledged commissions called upon by the Department on Church and Society would include participants selected for their experience in theology, in the social sciences, and for their competence as leaders in economic and political life. As years went by, Paul developed a style of ecumenical dialogue more lay, less "western" and more universal than any previous ecumenical meetings.

Paul Abrecht and I strongly felt that a continued dialogue of the laity with the church was a must in the pluralist, democratic world in which we live, constituting the very basis of the redemption of all of us. And we felt that churches and business as well as other social groups had erred in assuming that their dogmas and their needs were above public scrutiny and challenge. Conversely, the churches do not see themselves as experts on the technical problems of development, but they quite justifiably want to draw together the insights of those who are engaged in development and submit them to the scrutiny and analysis of Christians social thought. Evidently, if all Christians would speak the same language as regards all-round development (of which economic growth is only a component), they can make themselves heard with so much more force within international governmental and non-governmental forums, governments and professional organizations.

We also felt that, in social ethics, the issue of principles versus context should lead to an osmosis between the two methods. Paul Abrecht emphasized the relativity of perennial principles of the Christian social ethic in view of ever-changing conditions, whereas I maintained that "no Christian can do without a

certain framework of basic principles of human existence as working criteria with which to evaluate the different situations in which he lives. The biblical truth about God's will and acts cannot be derived solely from situations which are always ambiguous and ambivalent with regard to good and evil..."[1] We easily agreed that "interaction between the two methods would aim at both obedience to the word of God and relevance to the concrete problems faced by people today".[2]

It was within this context that, in 1967, we envisaged the possibility of a meeting between the churches and business leaders to discuss the topic "International Economic Development in the Light of Business Experience and Christian Social Ethics". Paul Abrecht easily convinced his principals within the World Council whereas, on the Roman Catholic side, I was much encouraged by Msgr Joseph Gremillion, Secertary of the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace (of which I was a member).

Under the patronage of the WCC and of UNIAPAC, the meeting was held in Rotterdam, 6 and 7 June 1968, and was attended by a substantial number of Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic business leaders (mainly from the multinational companies). The heads of the delegations of the churches were Eugene Carson Blake, General Secretary of the WCC, and Msgr Gremillion.

This first meeting helped to overcome suspicions on both sides. Business leaders expressed their reservations about various church pronouncements on development and the often critical attitude of the church to private enterprise. Church representatives questioned the business leaders about the depth of their aid to development and the tendency of some businessmen to confuse the public and private interest in economic matters. Businessmen discovered that the churches were interested in their points of view and were indeed making more use of business experience than they had supposed. Church leaders discovered that a great number of their laymen from the business world were eager to participate in the discussion of Christian responsibility within the drastic transformations of modern society.

A broad consensus was reached on many topics of mutual interest. To quote a few: there must be no distinction between enlightened self-interest and responsibility for the common good: good business policy is usually the result of an inseparable mixture of both. Foreign firms should integrate themselves into the communities in which they operate and be concerned with the underlying social structures of the countries and regions in which they operate. Economic growth is not an end in itself, but a means to develop the talents of each and all. It must be measured against human needs, which comprise social and spiritual components as well as economic or material ones. As churches show growing understanding of economic realities, they can become more effective in stressing the need to preserve and promote human values. The entrepreneur has to apply profitability as a yardstick to ensure that he is not wasting his company's resources. If defined as a criterion for the efficient use of resources and a spur for creative enterprise, profits can be ethically acceptable. A better understanding of the economic and social aspects of development requires freer communication

[1]WCC's Zagorsk consultation, March 1968.
[2]*Ibid.*

between the churches and the business community on a basis of mutual respect through meaningful and continued dialogue. This dialogue could very well be extended to include non-Christians, whether members of other religious groups or people on the fringes of or without religious beliefs, as long as they are people of goodwill and ethical convictions... To sum up, a number of deliberate efforts were recommended which the business community can and should make to promote beneficial economic growth, balanced social development, cultural integration of industry and the safeguarding of human values. But the market forces, however valuable, do not by themselves totally contribute to the achievement of the oikoumene, understood as the Christian concern for social justice.

Ecumenical in its outlook, its organization and its arrangements, it may be said without undue exaggeration that UNIAPAC was the first forum, since the separation of the Christian churches, that Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox business leaders were meeting with representatives of the churches with a view to study together the problems of development. Not the least result of the meeting was the unanimous desire to see it institutionalized in the future with the aim of confronting views of faith, human promotion, development and reconciliation of economic and social objectives within the perspective of God's action in, and purpose for, the world.

A second meeting was held in Vevey, Switzerland, 20 and 21 November 1969. The theme was "Human Values in Industrial Society". Participants assessed in what ways our modern industrial society may harm the human person.

Since then the World Council, thanks to Paul Abrecht, and UNIAPAC have been regularly (once every two years, at least) holding similar meetings, as had been vigorously suggested in Rotterdam.

It is interesting to note that, in parallel with this institutionalized dialogue between churches and the business world, cooperation between the World Council and the Roman Catholic Church in the study of social questions was stimulated by Paul Abrecht and Msgr Joseph Gremillion. Just as between the WCC and UNIAPAC, a substantial measure of agreement was reached on the possibility of unified action in the area of society, development and peace. Particularly significant in this respect and actually consonant with the findings resulting from the churches/business dialogue were the conclusions reached at the Beirut conference on world cooperation for development (see the paper by Philip Land in this volume).

Within this interchurch cooperation, I was sometimes called upon to participate, as a member of the Roman Catholic delegation, in major conferences and seminars organized by the WCC's Department on Church and Society. I vividly remember, for instance, the WCC consultation on "Global Environment, Economic Growth and Social Justice" (Cardiff, Wales, September 1972), the world conference on "Science and Technology for Human Development" (Bucharest, June-July 1974), as well as other meetings held mainly at the WCC's Geneva headquarters.

These meetings were superbly masterminded by Paul Abrecht. I have always marvelled at his talent for organization and his outstanding ability to have people from different creeds, cultures, countries, activities, work together peacefully and constructively as a friendly team. Paul himself has always kept a low pro-

file, but even his modesty could not conceal the radiance of his dedicated spirit and soul.

The crisis of society

What, indeed, is at stake? What is involved is a general crisis of society which has not succeeded in coupling the development of material prosperity and the blossoming of spiritual disparity between the standards of living of "affluent" and "developing" countries. Wasteful life-styles of the rich should be reconsidered, whereas the rampant poverty of over one half of the planet's inhabitants should be fought through the satisfaction of basic human requirements: food, housing, health, education, work and freedom.

Hundreds of millions of people still endure squalor, inadequate housing and lack of the most basic services: a condition of life below any rational definition of human decency. What will this situation become as, between now and the beginning of the next century, two more billion people — mostly from developing countries — will be knocking at the door?

In order to avoid a substantial worsening of the situation during the coming decades, basic requirements should be met by all means as a first step towards a gradual improvement of the quality of life. Rather than the "trickle down" concept, a progressive satisfaction of basic human needs would warrant a development that would primarily start at the grassroots. Once such minimal requirements are met, one may expect a gradual development of human capacities and material resources, resulting in innovative processes, jobs, self-reliance, human dignity and a sustainable development.

Evidently, this human ecology imperatively involves a holistic discipline, a systems approach, a total rather than a fragmentary look at problems, interdisciplinary thinking as well as cross-fertilization of ideas and actions. It means a world not broken into Cartesian chips, but a world that is a oneness, through a genuine desire for a way of life that would enable more individual fulfilment, more conviviality and more symbiosis with God's gifts (the natural environment).

Current technocratic systems have suppressed hope and stifled initiative. All the stages of individual growth are programmed without, however, obtaining the development of each individual's specific talents. From this often arise a poignant feeling of frustration, apathy, and the impression of floundering in a world devoid of an ideal, in which the concept of the sacred is strongly threatened. This general desacralization, sometimes interpreted as demythologization, challenges the most basic values: God, family, country, society, authority and responsibility. Thank God, an increasingly important number of people think that the satisfaction of demands for dignity, self-fulfilment, responsibility and participation is of greater weight than material prosperity without freedom.

Abusive centralization of organizations and of decisions, plus their growing complexity, have provoked, at all levels of economic and social life, a loss in the sense of responsibility and, in addition to decreased efficiency, a feeling of oppression and thus of revolt against the anonymity of the constraints.

Participation is not a "recipe" to increase productivity. Certainly it is a factor of efficiency, but its real raison d'être is to foster human promotion. "If the

structures and functioning of an economic system are of a nature to compromise the human dignity of those who are employed in it, dulling their sense of responsibility and removing all personal initiative from them, we will judge this system unjust, even if the wealth produced reaches a high level and is distributed according to the laws of justice and equity."[3]

The world is changing, but the light of revealed truth always remains the same. A return to the sources and a constant probing of Christian doctrine are necessary to permit its implementation. Then, as in all circumstances, the solutions and actions will result from a motivation and an ethic: the service of God and humanity, love of people, development of the whole person and all persons. In the service of their neighbour, persons will develop their own specific personality and act out their God-given talents.

Now, does this seem too great a vision to bear or to realize? If it does, is it not because we may have been more concerned with humanizing Christianity than with Christianizing humanity? Seeking to spread faith in Christ and trying to create a juster and better world should go together.

What, then, are we to do? We know that there can be no renewal without a *personal* change of heart. "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all the rest shall be added to you." We may seek the rest with the greatest determination and generosity but we cannot because of this alone except the kingdom of God "to be added unto us". There is a divine economy of salvation. God does not fall in with our plans unless they are in line with *his* plan for salvation through faith, love and through the *cross*.

Let us each one of us continue on this great task of the development of the human community by turning to God and seeking not our plan but *God's*. What is needed is nothing less than a profound conversion — repentance — a turning again, of mind and heart, not once only but daily. One can never be said to be completely converted. We must return again, continually, in the midst of our offices, on our journeys, before our committees, in all our activities, to the source of conversion: *the cross*. God became human and suffered on the cross for the salvation of the world. To become Christ's followers we must take up *our* cross and follow *him*. One has to be like the seed which has to die before it grows into a plant. So, in continual death and continual growth, we shall be given by God to the service of his world. We shall work through all the institutions of that world, for the coming of the kingdom of the crucified. And in every activity, be it economic, social, cultural, political, see only these two final realities: the gospel of God and the family of humanity.

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[3]*Mater et Magistra*, 83.

The Details Are Hazy, the Impact Remains Strong

Chris Ledger

The details are hazy in my mind, but the impact remains as strong as if it were yesterday. That sums up my feelings and memories of the conferences on "Faith, Science and the Future", organized by the World Council of Churches five years ago. Note the plural, conferences, for there were two: first, a world conference of science students; then, the larger, more publicized event held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA.

The details are hazy, the impact remains strong...

I remember first reading about plans for the conference and feeling great excitement about them. At the time, I was a recent graduate of science, frustrated by the refusal of science education to entertain questioning about politics, ethics, let alone religion. I found some refuge in the Student Christian Movement where such questioning was at least respected, but even there little attention was given to the role of science and technology in our world. So to hear of a conference of people from many nations and cultures gathering to consider issues of faith, science and technology in a spirit of ecumenism was like a gasp of fresh air. I wanted to be there and was delighted when I was invited to go.

The details are hazy, the impact remains strong...

At the science students' conference, I met other young students who had shared my frustration in being locked into the prison of one academic discipline with only one window to look onto the world. The windows were different — chemistry, economics, theology — but the effect was the same. We talked and sometimes shouted, understood and sometimes misunderstood, laughed and sometimes cried with anger or frustration.

The details are hazy, the impact remains strong...

At the later, much larger MIT conference, the students continued to meet and found a new unity and common purpose based on our earlier painful but valuable process of meeting each other, agreeing and disagreeing with each other. Much time and heartache was spent deciding on the most effective presentation of our concerns to the Assembly so that the voice of youth might be heard. There was frustration that youth are so often regarded as "entertaining" and little more.

The details are hazy, the impact remains strong...

The WCC conferences provided me with motivation and direction on my return to Australia. I decided to pursue interdisciplinary research in science, technology and society and to work with local churches in pursuing the issues raised at MIT. Many of the details and words have faded from my memory: the

reports of the conferences have recorded them elsewhere. The impact of those meetings, however, remains as strong as ever. I left knowing there were others all around the world I could now call friends who shared my hopes and dreams that science and technology might honour and sustain (rather than destroy) God's people and God's created world. The knowledge that there are many striving to bring those hopes and dreams to fruition gives courage for the journey.

A Community of Learning

Albert H. van den Heuvel

I find it an odd experience to try my hand at an essay which is to mark the end of Paul Abrecht's service to the World Council of Churches. When I appeared on the ecumenical scene, Paul was already there and had become the embodiment of the Council's concern for church and society. I became an officer of the WCC's Youth Department in 1958 and one of its secretaries in 1960. The Council was much smaller in those days. We were still housed in the barracks of the route de Malagnou, and ecumenical life was essentially a community life. On Monday morning we said our weekly prayers in the living-room of the main chalet and we drank our summer tea on the lawn of what was not much more than a large family house.

We youngsters tried to get in on the game and did our utmost to attract the attention of the main staffers: Willem Visser 't Hooft of course, but also Leslie Cooke of Inter-Church Aid, Bob Bilheimer of the Study Department, Fred Nolde of International Affairs, Frank Northam of Finance, Keith Bridston of Faith and Order, Philip Potter of the Youth Department, and Paul Abrecht. With Madeleine Barot and perhaps a few more, they formed the inner circle of the WCC. Paul had a special place in the group. With Bob Bilheimer he shared that tremendous American enthusiasm and working drive which was one of the secrets of the Council's success in those days. And from the beginning we knew that Paul Abrecht had a very special gift: he was a fisher of men. Paul was able to get everybody in the whole world to work for the WCC. He, more than anybody else on the staff, was able to get people, mostly lay, who bore heavy responsibilities in their everyday life, to give time to the ecumenical movement. Not only because they were convinced that such was their Christian duty but also because leaders like Paul Abrecht gave them a chance to discuss and prophesy at a level which was at the same time remote from their daily duties and freer than the disciplined level on which they had earned their positions.

Now we want to honour him following his retirement. How does one do that?

One way, of course, would be to dedicate to him the finest piece of social ethics of which one is capable. I hope that several of my co-contributors to this *Festschrift* will do that. I have chosen another entry: Paul Abrecht had been able in the times that I was his colleague and friend to bring people to give an account of the hope that is within us, that is to say as honestly as one can what this type of ministry did to us. I will try to testify in these pages what the ecumenical movement has meant to me in the different stages of my life: as an ecumenical staffer, as an executive officer in my own church and now in a secular position.

In order to do that I must ask the reader to appreciate my situation: white, European, theologically educated, member of an old national church which was

once the main ideological pillar of the Dutch society, but now has become an ancient religious community, comprising not more than some 20 percent of the population. A shrinking church.

That last fact has proved to be both painful and salutary. It is painful to see how the process of secularization demoted the Christian faith as the backbone of national thinking, even beyond the phase where the stream of thought and practice held an appeal for the whole of the population. It is painful to see how a younger generation has largely been distanced from the core of its message. It is salutary where the self-evident acceptance of the gospel has given place to the necessity to choose for it; it is certainly salutary to experience that the long experiment of the church being allied with secular power has been ended. Churches in the Netherlands have been blessed with the necessity to prove their existence every inch of the way: a painful blessing but a very real one.

The saving challenge of the ecumenical movement

I do not think we could have done it without the ecumenical movement. Had we not been educated in the school of those like Visser 't Hooft and Abrecht, had we not benefited from the great number of Christians from the third world whom they brought together, we would have turned into a dusty museum of bitter sects, closing our eyes to the reality of our own guilty history and pretending that we were only going through a period of oppression by the devil, ready to recuperate our power the moment our contemporaries would admit their weakness.

It is the ecumenical movement which has saved the European churches from the temptation to wait for the moment in which the failure of nerve of our culture would make it susceptible to a return to the old-fashioned religion of our fathers.

How?

That question has to be answered by every church in the context of its own history and its own social context. A minority church living in an African or Asian context will give a different testimony from that of the churches of eastern Europe, brutally dispossessed of their historical privileges in the aftermath of the Russian revolution. Provinces of the Roman Catholic Church will have to tell a different tale from that of historical churches in western Europe, and the Christian communities of North America will show yet different developments from their daughter churches in Latin America. It is the never-ending fascination of the ecumenical movement that it brings together communities which relate their experiences with the gospel in paradigms that are all derivative from the same source but all shaped by the peculiarities of their own history: a magnified picture of a family in which the children have gone their own way, are part of one family and all so different.

The Reformed tradition to which I belong finds its origins in the rupture of the Christian tradition by the Reformation. Prepared by the emancipation of the common people in the late Middle Ages, we broke away from the main western Catholic tradition at the time in which the episcopal — and papal — tradition had become so politicized that the liberating dimension of the gospel seemed submerged in the conserving institutions of power and dominance. Calvin, more than Luther, saw no other way to respond to the divine calling than to reconstitute the Christian community around the preaching of the gospel. He despaired of the possible renewal of the episcopal guardian of tradition.

So after the experiment with continuity the experiment of discontinuity began. Earlier reconstitution of the origins of the Christian faith in the monastic tradition were no longer sufficient, requiring as they did an existence away from ordinary life and denying by their very nature entry to ordinary people who wanted to serve their God and their neighbours within their daily life. The Reformation was essentially a lay movement; it can also be regarded as the final stage of the monastic tradition: living the faith outside the immediate dominance of the episcopacy, which had lost its spiritual authority and had become an instrument of political power, thinly clad in religious garb.

The Reformation replaced the authority of the ministry by the authority of the word, regrouped its leadership around the preaching of the gospel and appointed lay leadership to govern the community and execute its offices of discipline and service to the needy. Looking back on the period of its origins we see in the Reformation period all the appearances of an emancipatory movement of the laity. Even when its ministers inherited many of the pretences of the priests, they remained ordained laymen, teachers and professors rather than sacramental depositors of objective powers.

The experiment of discontinuity became embodied in the community of the word. Not the tradition of grace in the mysteries of the sacraments but the proclamation of the word became the backbone of ecclesiastical power. And so for three hundred years that balance of power remained intact: the bishop's priests with their sacramental authority over against the ministers of the word with their proclamatory authority, continuity over against continuity, claim against claim.

The ecumenical movement in its modern twentieth century appearance challenged the community of the word in different ways. Remember I am speaking here about the Reformed tradition in a majority situation, that is a situation in which it had grown accustomed to power. On the whole the church was unquestionably part of the establishment. Of course, the traditional churches have always known their pockets of renewal, their moments of purity and return to central values, their voices of prophesy. Yet, in the main, churches like the one I belong to were so much the pillar of morality and the measure of acceptability that collegiality with power and struggle for power could not be avoided. Proudly we called ourselves *national* churches.

The ecumenical movement robbed us of the self-evidence of that situation. In a very simple way it confronted us with the fact that in a global perspective most churches are small, poor and struggling; in a much more fundamental way it taught us that the gospel itself is the account of a minority faith opting for the experiment of service rather than the experiment of dominion. I consider that challenge — service rather than domination — to my church so fundamental that I do not hesitate to locate there the twentieth century form of the traditional call to repentance.

One should not regard this development as self-evident or inevitable. The ecumenical movement has always been present in the Christian church. It was part of the dream of each of its teachers, but for centuries it never progressed from what appeared in the end to be a sterile call for unity, dutifully repeated by

every theologian of name but equally often condemned to remain a pious wish. Only in our time the idea became reality. Many external conditions contributed to this development. Modern communication techniques were a tremendous asset; travel became faster and accessible; cultural and philosophical developments caused sufficient unease to join forces; last but not least, the upheavals of two world wars caused churches to rethink their existence in a fundamental way. Yet they could have reacted very differently to all these happenings. Like other religious renewal movements the churches could have chosen a political course, in which they worked at restoring their powers. They could have tried with the same fervour as shown by several Islamic groups to use the weakness of a guilt-ridden culture for their own ends. They could have exploited the media and gone electronic. They could have thrown in their lot with the confessional political parties and used them as a vehicle for their road back to power.

But they did not.

They did not follow the example of political systems which at the same time hardened their grip on people. Many churches in the ecumenical movement — and I am speaking about them only at this point — left the electronic church to the sects and the nostalgia for power to some conservative groups. The former carved out a place for themselves by indeed (mis)using the media for all they are worth, while the latter under the disguise of rejecting a political stance overtly or implicitly supported the power establishment in their countries. On the other hand, wherever Evangelicals discovered a new role for themselves in the witness and service to the less fortunate in their country, they moved from a classical evangelical position to an ecumenical one.

No, by their free choice the churches in the ecumenical movement joined the struggle of the less powerful churches of the third (and fourth) world and took the road of service and searching.

Upon reflection, that choice for the ecumenical adventure and the consequent rupture with centuries of power-seeking is a small miracle. It is as if the church in the thirteenth century had chosen the road of St Francis — which it did not! — rather than the one of St Dominic — which it did! I have during the past 25 years lived this choice on a number of levels in the churches: as an ecumenical staffer, as a church executive and now as a lay theologian in a secular occupation. At all these levels I have seen how difficult the choice is and how painful. It is obvious that the main European churches have great difficulty in sticking to their choice. Everywhere forces of restoration are at work. They may take the form of confessional revival or the praxis of withdrawal. They are recognizable by the way in which they spiritualize the fight against a sinful world and advocate the return to beliefs which allow for coexistence with the existing power structure. The ecumenical posture is recognized by its protest against injustice and its belief that the Christian faith is a dissenter's faith at all times and in all places. I am aware that such reasoning is not universally accepted or acceptable and meets with scorn in many quarters. The sects claim that they save people from a wicked world by giving them refuge against evil; Evangelicals do not plead for less than a return to the message of personal salvation. Yet, all the water of the sea cannot wash away the reality that the

churches in the ecumenical movement have given voice to those with less chances in this world and that the conservative forces in the churches end up supporting the powerful, if only because they do not raise their voices in protest.

Learning again to speak

It is my deep conviction that it was the ecumenical movement which liberated my confessional community from the deadly embrace of the powers that be. The growing intercourse with people in very different circumstances, the constant insistence that the weak should have the place of honour, the rediscovery of the Christian interpretation of poverty and suffering, the testing of a theological tradition by having to formulate its relevance in other cultures — all these dimensions of the ecumenical movement drove my church out of its corners into the free field of God's calling to his total creation.

In the community of the word, which the Reformed tradition wanted to be before all other things, it meant that after centuries of *preaching* we had to learn to *speak* again. After a long period in which our teachers and leaders had demanded that the morality of the country, the basis of our thinking and the judgment on the people's behaviour be cast in *our* language, we now had to begin to learn to communicate with different people who, we soon discovered, also formed the majority within our own house. Like our forefathers we had to gather up the language of the people and forge it into vehicles for the story about God and humanity. The ambivalent linguistics of prevalent social, political and cultural thinking had to bear the message of grace and hope.

It appeared a tall order, and I do not think that we have succeeded very convincingly as yet. Apparently we gave a great number of humanists the chance to volunteer the thesis that churches went into this verbal calisthenics because their traditional message had worn thin. And a disconcerting number of somewhat more traditionally thinking Christians turned that same analysis into a blistering accusation of the ecumenical movement: faith replaced by politics.

The older European churches began "to speak" again during and after World War II. Now, some forty years later, one sees how difficult these first steps were. Many of the earlier proclamations about social and political questions sound naively pious or read like amateur political stuff. Only a few are outstanding and will be remembered. The same is true for what councils and conferences said. Very often the experience in such gatherings was stronger than their result in statements or action. Much of the critique on our words is justified. But too few have seen what actually happened in these years.

The ecumenical movement brought together two discoveries of ultimate importance: the discovery that the church is a gathering of (lay) people with tremendous experience and expertise; and the discovery that the church is an international community. The World Council of Churches and especially its Departments of the Laity and on Church and Society have capitalized on these aspects. The results have changed the face of Christendom. Not only did the churches discover what the experience of universality entails; they also rediscovered in praxis the meaning of the concept of Catholicity. And in that

discovery the heart of the gospel lit up with new force: the message that God loves the weak, the sinners, the unfree, the poor. So the ears of the older churches were opened for the cry of despair and accusation from the younger churches in poor areas.

We are only in the beginning of that new period of the history of the church and it will take time to discover its consequences. Churches can so easily fall back on perversions of the gospel!

Yet, he who has eyes to see can observe the tremendous struggle which is going on in the older churches because of the ecumenical movement. Giving up power hurts, especially when there are such excellent excuses not to give it up. Does not power mean influence? And influence can be used for excellent purposes. Does not power mean security for people? And people do need security. Does not power mean opportunity for mission? And the church *is* mission in a certain sense.

But power also means diplomacy. It means speaking up only when it does not diminish standing. Power means allegiances and alliances. It means community with the establishment and it means alienation from those who have no power. It also stands for independence and autonomy, two concepts which do not rank high in the biblical scale of values.

The struggle in the Reformed tradition can be measured by the discussion on how and when the church should speak. In the ecumenical movement the churches have learned to speak up when injustice threatens the people, especially the less fortunate. In the western European context that can only mean speaking up for a new economic order in which fair prices are paid for resources, labour and products. It inevitably means protest against what is actually happening in the realm of economic relations between poor and rich nations.

And not only the economic discussion becomes difficult; the same is true for the debate on the function of science, for the limits of responsible defence and for the way in which nations treat each other politically. A church with ecumenical dimensions of thinking and practice will have to diverge from the acceptable vision of who is our enemy and who is our friend. It can only reject national pride and its political results. It will lead the nations to confession of guilt. All of that because it has learned that the message of grace, forgiveness and hope is free but only for those who accept it with humility and wonder.

Ecumenical churches will speak up. They have learned to distrust silence more than ill-conceived words. They will speak up *as churches* and not leave political pronouncements to friendly political parties. Not because churches have more insight and knowledge, but because *faith* requires them to speak.

Of couse they will make use of their own experts: there is no issue in which churches have no members who belong to the best in their field. They will also speak in a way which does not harm other people. Therefore they shall not speak in the same manner to different situations. A Christian politician can be addressed very differently from someone who has given up the Christian faith. A Muslim society will evoke other ways to speak than a secular state.

All of that will require from the churches that they give great care to the *way* they are speaking. But speak they will!

And in case they make mistakes, they can openly confess them. Such confession, so seldom in political pronouncements, would bring in itself a breath of fresh air to the community.

Paul Abrecht leaves at a time when the ecumenical movement is not very popular in the churches; he leaves the WCC when even within the member churches the Council is severely criticized. There may be good reasons for such critique, but never the one too often heard that the Council or the church is speaking too much and too often about things not their first concern. That lesson has been learned in the last thirty years, and I would be surprised if it went unheeded.

Ecumenism in the Fast Lane

Keith Bridston

In April 1912 Gilbert Murray gave a course of lectures later published as *Five Stages of Greek Religion*. These germinal studies were delivered at Columbia University, only a stone's throw from Union Theological Seminary in New York where Paul Abrecht received his basic theological training under such distinguished mentors as Reinhold Niebuhr and John Bennett and did some of his first teaching as an assistant to them. That has left a *characteris indelibus* upon him and served him well in his ecumenical pilgrimage. Or should one say "race"?

For Dr Abrecht is a fast driver and an agile one, or he would not have survived a quarter of a century of swerving and dodging on the rue de Mont Blanc and other race tracks called streets and avenues in Calvin's city of God. And though the automobiles in which he hurtles down these unformed thoroughfares are modest in price and horsepower, as befits an ecumenical servant, he never hesitates to move in the fast lanes ordinarily reserved by European elitism for Mercedes and BMWs whose price, it is assumed, entitles their owners to drive at whatever speeds their pocketbooks dictate.

But I speak in figures and metaphors and parables. One of the latest volumes which Paul Abrecht has edited is addressed to the challenge of nuclear disarmament and, appropriately, is entitled *Before It's Too Late*.[1] It is *always* too late for Paul and that is why he is always in such a hurry. Knowing his father, you might suspect a genetic trait. But it is more than that. He has a sixth sense for the critical emergent issues facing the churches; and before the churches are completely aware of them, these issues have become ecumenical programmes and eventually conferences which these churches are "invited" to support.

Most of the member churches of the World Council of Churches are not accustomed to heavy traffic in the fast lanes, and these whirlwind moves sometimes leave them baffled, breathless and bewildered. "Rapid change" is Paul Abrecht's middle name whether it be social or ecumenical. For the WCC itself is not the most agile and flexible of vehicles for ecumenical movement, so that between towing lethargic church leaders and manoeuvring among the institutional traffic barriers and stop signs of the Council itself, Paul sometimes has to accelerate into the express lanes where warning whistles are difficult to hear and seldom honoured.

Nevertheless, few complain about the ride once the destination is reached. And in that sense, the Baptist Bullet has a phenomenal track record, one which

[1]Report of a public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament organized by the WCC in November 1981, Geneva, WCC, 1983.

without excessive hyperbole might be called the ecumenical version of "Chariots of Fire". St Paul did not back away from the Olympic image in depicting the character of the Christian life, and this other Paul has run race after race, not infrequently against the clock, and come away with many a laurel wreath.

Stages of development of the ecumenical movement

But to become more pedestrian and return to Gilbert Murray, the developmental stages he describes in Greek religion may be a metaphor for the evolution of the ecumenical movement. That "life history", as Erik Erikson the psycho-analytic historian dubs it, has its own developmental pattern, and most of the stages as they have been exemplified in the WCC have been bridged by Paul Abrecht's professional career as a WCC staff member.

Briefly, Murray's stages are: first, "the primitive Euetheia or Age of Ignorance"; second, "the Olympian or classical state... of the great Olympian gods, who dominated and ruled the imagination of Rome"; third, "the Hellenistic period... when the Greek mind, still in its full creative vigour, made its first response to the twofold failure of the world in which it had put its faith, the open bankruptcy of the Olympian religion and the collapse of the city-state"; fourth, "a period based on the consciousness of manifold failure, and consequently touched with both morbidity and with that spiritual exaltation which is so often the companion of morbidity.... This sense of failure, this progressive loss of hope in the world, in sober calculation, and in organized human effort, threw the later Greek back upon his own soul, upon the pursuit of personal holiness, upon emotions, mysteries and revelations, upon the comparative neglect of this transitory and imperfect world for the sake of some dream-world far off"; fifth, "when the old religion in the time of Julian roused itself for a last spiritual protest against the all-conquering 'atheism' of the Christians".

Against this schema it is, of course, inappropriate to press the analogies with "ecumenical religion" too far. But there are, no doubt, some familiar semblances. And there are what the psychologists might identify as "regressive traits" among us today, including that first stage to which Murray says "our anthropologists and explorers have found parallels in every part of the world". He refers to a Dr Preuss (no relation to a present WCC Central Committee member) who "applies to it the charming word 'Urdummheit', or 'primal stupidity'". How many times those who have worked with Dr Abrecht on the brink of an ecumenical conference have heard similar terminology employed in reference to recalcitrant staff colleagues or Central Committee members suspected of blocking the traffic and obstructing the freeway of ecumenical movement!

Though this is strictly a matter of personal opinion, the stage which most resembles the present state of the oikoumene may well be Murray's fourth. The chapter he devotes to it is entitled "The Failure of Nerve". He summarizes the tension underlying the crisis as follows: "Mankind has not yet decided which of two opposite methods leads to the fuller and deeper knowledge of the world: the patient and sympathetic vision of the good citizen who lives in it, or the ecstatic vision of the saint who rejects it."

This is a classical dialectic with which the theological worthies of Union Seminary such as Niebuhr, Bennett, Paul Tillich and others were struggling during Paul Abrecht's academic apprenticeship and which marks much of his own ecumenical production since then. He himself falls in neither category quite comfortably: on the one hand, he is something of an "ecstatic visionary", but very much within the world, and obviously has not rejected church or society; on the other hand, though the fact that he usually operates at full throttle would appear to belie it, he is not only "sympathetic" but also "patient" as an ecumenical "good citizen".

This should be explained a little more fully. If, indeed there is a certain element of "loss of nerve" in the present ecumenical movement as it proceeds beyond the stage of "the great Olympian gods" (i.e. John R. Mott, J.H. Oldham, William Temple, George Bell, W.H. Visser 't Hooft, *et al.*), the effervescent Dr Abrecht has never lost his. Some think he never had any lack of nerve to begin with, considering some of the chancy enterprises he has initiated. But, contrary to appearances, he is eminently patient, which is another way of saying that he is tenacious and has a long-range view. If that were not the case there would never have been a 1966 Church and Society conference, or a world conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" at MIT, or a hearing on nuclear disarmament, to name only a few of the testaments to his remarkable patience, especially in one who does not, I would guess, come by it naturally but only by faith and grace alone, to use Lutheran terminology.

Is he "sympathetic"? For one who is blessed, or cursed, with monocular vision and a compulsive single-mindedness, the Rev. Dr Abrecht's attention is not easily captured. He may well earn the epitaph on the tombstone of one waiter (or "deacon" in biblical terminology): "God finally caught his eye." Fowler in his *Modern English Usage* condescends to accept "sympathetic" in some of its uses as a legitimate Gallicism but raises other problems which would in themselves, and particularly in the case of Paul Abrecht, incline one to search for a more appropriate word. Perhaps "empathy" might do, at least as it is defined in Webster's dictionary: "Imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being."

This is particularly apt in this context, because we are more interested in his ways of working than in his psychological profile, however fascinating that may be. His peculiar talent, though he has others perhaps not so "peculiar", is his capacity to infect others with his own excitement and to recruit them for whatever project he has in hand at the moment. In some less exalted circles he might be considered the consummate con-artist. But his con-games are not deceptive or beneath the table. Few, if any, of the illustrious alumni of his enlistment blandishments for the ecumenical campaign have complained about having been recruited. Quite the contrary. Some, like Roger Shinn, Ronald Preston, David Rose, Margaret Mead and many others too numerous to mention, just came back for more and only complained when they were left out of the next enterprise.

As a consequence, Paul Abrecht has accomplished more with less resources in terms of staff support than any other executive in the history of the WCC. In a sense, he represents the old, familial, informal beginnings of the WCC in the

chalet and temporary barracks on the route de Malagnou. There is a temptation to romanticize those conditions, which were more imposed by necessity than any grand ecumenical strategy. Nevertheless, it was a period in which one learned to make optimal use of limited resources and often discovered with the architect Mies van der Rohs that "less is more".

Now some ideologues have dismissed this style of operation as "elitist" and declared it *passé*. Of course, the ecumenical populists have a point in their concern to make the movement more participatory. But it would be idiocy to think that some of the excruciatingly complex issues on the agenda, such as nuclear disarmament, can be addressed only by mass meetings or prayer cells, however well intentioned and "participatory". As Leonard Hodgson, one-time secretary of Faith and Order and later Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford, once wrote: "Prayer is no substitute for hard thinking." Paul Abrecht's mobilization of the Brightest and Best to tackle the critical questions of church and society admittedly has potential hazards as an ecumenical strategy and methodology. But he has, as far as I know, never claimed it to be the only way of working.

And it must also be admitted that the effectiveness of the method is to some degree dependent on his own special personal qualities. Nonetheless, it has relevance to the whole of the WCC in demonstrating that the major function of the curial staff in Geneva is to be enablers designing, managing, and organizing the ecumenical encounter. It is the fine art of using other people, not exploitatively but as collaborators in the total endeavour. It is the organizational representation of One Body acknowledging and utilizing the variety of gifts of its diverse members. If that be "elitism", make the best of it!

Religion, rightly understood

Paul Abrecht's finesse in this fine art, which he has demonstrated time and again and which in turn brings some of the carping criticism from those less talented and envious of his accomplishments, should be a model for all present and future ecumenical administrators. Not an insignificant part of this capacity lies in the fact that he is a genuine *homo religiosus* — the Right Stuff. He would blanch at the ascription if "religious" were used in its ordinary, debased sense. But understood in a totally anti-pietistic and non-eulogistic way, it does not fall far short of describing the man. "Enigmatic" is the current code word of those who don't like what they don't understand and seek to exorcize mystery by totemistic language. The term "religious" has suffered a similar fate in common usage. But Gilbert Murray's dissection of the word illuminates its anatomy:

> Religion, like poetry and most other living things, cannot be defined.... All round us on every side there is an uncharted region, just fragments of the fringe of it explored, and those imperfectly; it is with this that religion deals. And secondly we may note that religion deals with its own province not tentatively, by the normal methods of patient intellectual research, but directly, and by methods of emotion or sub-conscious apprehension.... Man must have some relation towards the uncharted, the mysterious, tracts of life which surround him on every side. And for my own part I am content to say that his method must be to a large extent very much what St Paul calls *pistis* or faith: that is, some attitude not of the conscious intellect but of the whole being, using all its powers of sensitiveness, all its feeblest and most inarticulate feelers and tentacles, in the effort somehow to touch by these that which cannot be grasped by the definite

> senses or analyzed by the conscious reason. What we gain is an insecure but a precious possession. We gain no dogma, at least no safe dogma, but we gain much more. We gain something hard to define, which lies at the heart not only of religion, but of art and poetry and all the higher strivings of human emotion. I believe that at times we actually gain practical guidance in some questions where experience and argument fail.

One of the charming things about Paul Abrecht — again it might be an example to sober-sided, over-conscientious "leaders" who take themselves and their agendas far too seriously to be taken seriously — is that he has a sense of humour. As Kierkegaard once observed: "Humour is also the joy which has overcome the world." Let him tell you about the candle-light service in a rural area of Greece in which he had inadvertently involved his Church and Society working committee, much to the annoyance of Dr Visser 't Hooft. When the ruffled feathers had been smoothed, the late Denys Munby of Oxford told Paul and the General Secretary at breakfast the next morning: "Some may like Zoroastrianism; as for me, I prefer Mithraism." That Dr Abrecht keeps such absurd episodes alive in the ecumenical archival memory says something about the iconoclastic quality of his piety.

My calendar tells me that Paul Abrecht has been around for a long time. But, as we have noted, the monocular reverend is not always observant of such minor matters. Erik Erikson's description of the *homo religiosus* may sum it all up:

> He is always older, or in early years suddenly becomes older, than his playmates or even his parents and teachers, and focuses in a precocious way on what it takes others a lifetime to gain a mere inkling of.... To him, history ends as well as starts with him; others must look to their memories, to legends, or to books to find models for the present and the future in what their predecessors have said and done. No wonder that he is something of an old man (a *philosophus*, and a sad one) when his age-mates are young, or that he remains something of a child when they age with finality.

Sad or not, Paul Abrecht had no predecessors in the WCC. We may wonder whether such an innovator can have any real successor.

Save the Abrecht: Rare Ecumenical Species is Threatened

John M. Francis

> We live today in a globally interconnected world, in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent. To describe this world appropriately we need an ecological perspective which the Cartesian worldview does not offer.
>
> Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, Flamingo, 1983

GENUS SPECIFICUS

The Abrecht is a tall, distinguished, grey-haired creature whose limbs have been extended over the years by excessive loading with very large briefcases. These are usually stuffed with voluminous draft reports from working committees, annotated agendas, issue group papers and other essentials of ecumenical survival. The identifying plumage takes the form of a splendid tweed cap, tightly woven and spun from 100 percent worsted lambswool — a formidable protection against the elements. This characteristic headgear is similar to that sported by males in northern Britain and betrays an early understanding and appreciation of the class struggle. Academic exposure to the moral philosophy and other writings of Adam Smith — a Scotsman of considerable distinction — is known to provoke a revolutionary response in the hearts and minds of certain economists: the Abrecht belongs in that tradition.

Viewed from a distance the Abrecht can easily be mistaken for many an elder statesman that frequents the corridors of the UN General Assembly building on Manhatten Island, but on closer inspection this species reveals an enormous appetite for new ideas and visions of the future. There is no genetic explanation for this phenomenon despite the three decades of analysis dedicated to understanding the world "problematique". However, it is a mark of differentiation that should not be lightly discounted.

In evolutionary terms the distinctive markings are thought to be derived from initial immersion in an aquatic environment; no early sightings are reported, although it is understood that this event must have been observed somewhere near the coastal states on the eastern seaboard of the USA. Subsequent resurfacing is known to have taken place in a post-Keynesian, pro-Niebuhrian atmosphere in the state of New York. This has been confirmed by a leading social anthropologist of the period. Migration to achieve a western European landfall in close proximity to Lac Léman, Geneva, generated a suitably convenient habitat that has been sustained for operational reasons.

Habitat

The Abrecht displays a preference for congenial surroundings which contain random heaps of reconstituted trees and recycled cellulose. Large quantities of this material are required on an annual basis for purposes of reproduction, and it is fair to say that this is a crucial link in the chain of survival. A negative feature of this environment is the contribution that it makes to the disappearance of the Amazonian rain forest; no doubt Charles Darwin would have had something to say about that. The offsetting factor is the redistribution of this material on a global scale, thereby maximizing the statistical disorder of the planet and providing further proof of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. An amazing demonstration of the First Law is often achieved during the course of ecumenical gatherings when the maxim "work is heat" can become productive in more than one sense.

In an enlightened age the goal of sustainability has also entered this habitat and has had an influence on patterns of work and play. The ethos is small and beautiful. The unit-cell, consisting of three active members, carefully plans the expeditions and forays from the centre to the periphery. All travel hopefully prepares the way to the land of solar arrays, hot rocks, nodding ducks and gene pools — a land flowing with renewable energy and chlorophyll. Thomas More called it "Utopia"; Henry David Thoreau described is as "Walden" (B.F. Skinner made it "Walden Two"); and Aldous Huxley wrote it up as an "Island". The constraints of present day expression identify it as JPSS — a kind of evolutionary lock on progressive adaptation. The Abrecht has been faithfully involved in the struggle to decode this message (just, participatory and sustainable society) over many years. What has become clear is that faith is part of the solution — but human nature is part of the problem. There is nothing to suggest that the UN secretariat is currently preparing a major international forum on this subject. Any further information will be circulated as soon as it becomes available.

Nutritional features

The strong survival instinct of the Abrecht demands that careful attention should be given to dietary matters. This can be easily attributed to a hereditary trait carried over from the early days of the ecumenical movement or the "hunter-gatherers" of a previous age. Some naturalists and conservationists have successfully established a correlation with the behavioural norms set out in the doctrinal concept of the "dominion of man"; others refute this evidence and favour a more pragmatic response. Further investigation is clearly required.

It is worthy of note that the Abrecht has refined an overall approach to this problem and has developed simultaneous working and feeding habits. It is rumoured that this represents the point of origin of the terms "working breakfast", "working lunch" and even "working dinner" that have now become commonplace in so many countries. Be that as it may, there seems little doubt that the creative energies released in dark and musty corners of Viennese watering holes, Italian trattoria or the routiers of France and Switzerland are always directed to achieve a specific objective in the ecumenical calendar of events. The

Abrechtian system of management by objectives leaves little to chance; attention to detail has always repaid dividends.

Reproductory cycle

Very limited information is available; a talented and far-flung brood is known to exist. However, for the purposes of this assessment, it must be acknowledged that there is only one Abrecht.

Migratory pattern

Frequent sightings in many countries in the northern hemisphere have been reported over the last thirty years or so. Occasional flights traversing the southern hemisphere (including the Antipodes) have also been noted by an eminent biologist in the University of Sydney. These reliable observations are complemented by a more regular series of recorded landings and departures at the Aéroport de Genève, which is generally regarded as an operational centre for the ecumenical genus as a whole. It is rumoured that a large colony of these global travellers has been encamped for some time in a tree-lined glade to the north of the city of Geneva. A "hive" of cellular construction is to be found there and is a recognizable nodal point for these worker-travellers. In many respects the external signs of activity in the vicinity of the "hive" are no different from those of other international colonies of workers who are involved in similar complex migratory patterns. Further research would be required before a systematic classification of these differences could be attempted.

Occasional perturbations and a significant shift in the balance of discernible activity at the "hive" (lasting for around one calendar month on the lunar cycle) have been detected at intervals of approximately seven to eight years. On these occasions new but temporary "assemblies" have occurred at widely separated locations on several continents; in the most recent phase of this cycle these transient centres have been reported at Uppsala, Sweden (1968), Nairobi, Kenya (1975) and Vancouver, Canada (1983). No empirical explanation can be given for this behaviour, but there is some evidence to suggest a wider geographical interest requiring a new constitutional balance to be struck between the tropical, equatorial and temperate zones. Here again more detailed investigation of this important process of adaptation will need to be pursued over the coming decades.

Communication modes

In many respects the Abrecht has maintained a classical, orthodox but remarkably diverse network of communications over many years. Deep probes have been commissioned by the main "hive" in suitably flowering regions and subject areas. The "gathered" material is then siphoned back to the hive where collation and synthesis takes place under the control of loyal acolytes and scribes dedicated to the task.

The seasonal shift generates a varied response and usually marks a progressive advance towards new territory for purposes of exploration and

discovery. Old doctrines and fresh theories are subjected to close scrutiny under the high-powered microscopic gaze of molecular biologists, nuclear physicists and other esoteric disciplines from within the scientific community (N.B., even theologians can be found within such enclaves). Nothing is left to chance; the ground is carefully prepared, the seeds planted and nurtured over periods of a week or more. Then the ideas begin to flow, the trees are felled, the pulp mills achieve the necessary production targets and the blank sheets of paper are delivered — the drafting process begins in earnest.

Statements are cast and recast, paragraphs moulded and remoulded, sentences reduced and expanded — the process is endless, inexorable. For some of those taking part it is like an encounter with infinity itself; others might describe it as a black hole of ultimate proportions. Either way a consensus is achieved and accepted (after discussion and amendment) and the product is disseminated far and wide. By this means is the word divided and propagated for the benefit of all. It is a formidable task — generously undertaken and honourably completed — as the record shows.

Survival strategy

Appeal 1: Addressed to those who have supported the species over many monsoons, droughts and rainy seasons:

— continue to act constructively to protect the long-term interests of this endangered species;
— ensure that members of the scientific community continue to contribute to the debate on ecological balance, the impact of technology, sustainability and resource usage, and to the developing dialogue with the community of faith;
— do not break the food chain;
— act to keep the sustenance flowing.

Appeal 2: Addressed to those with the capacity to propagate the seed corn:

— do not rely on wind-borne pollination or thermal air currents;
— establish a locally-based project group and keep your lines of communication open to the Geneva "hive";
— remember that nutrition is essential and feed the basic ideas with local experience (honey blended from many sources is often the best);
— remember, also, that the real test is *survival in a new locality;*
— keep your hopes and fears in balance;
— do not allow the future to become bad news.

Conservation

The Abrecht can be conserved but *not* in a glass case. Aquatic sightings during the warmer months are to be expected, particularly in the Aegean Sea. Some consideration is being given to the designation of a conservation area on the northern sub-continent of the Americas; this remains to be confirmed. However, it seems likely that this could also become a Site of Special Scientific Interest or possibly a centre of pilgrimage for devotees and collectors of ecumenical memorabilia. Numerous outlets remain to be explored.

Postlude

This is a light-hearted but sincere tribute to an ecumenical figure of great stature — Paul Abrecht. It has been my privilege to work alongside Paul at regular intervals over the past twelve years, to share a little of his triumphs and his disappointments, and above all to keep the faith. Although it is the end of an era, the work must continue as the most permanent acknowledgment of foundations well and truly laid down over the years.

Your contribution, Paul, will never be forgotten.

PART II

ISSUES IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Christian Presence in War, Revolution and Development: the Indonesian Case

T.B. Simatupang

When Paul Abrecht was invited to address the 1982 meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, in recognition of his long and remarkably distinguished service to the ecumenical movement in Church and Society, he referred to the conversation he and I had when we met for the first time in Jakarta, towards the end of 1958 or at the beginning of 1959.

Paul told the Committee how he visited me in what he described as a position of semi-confinement, at the heavily guarded official residence of the chief of staff of the Indonesian armed forces. What stuck in his mind was my response to his question as to what I was doing in such an unusual situation. According to his recollection, I told him that I was spending my time usefully studying the three Karls: the nineteenth century German philosopher of war Carl von Clausewitz, the nineteenth century German philosopher of revolution Karl Marx, and the twentieth century Swiss theologian Karl Barth.

At that time I was fascinated by the discovery that, when seen in a theological perspective, the struggle for liberation and justice through war and revolution, which had constituted my main preoccupation since the 1940s, became much more meaningful, much more realistic and at the same time much more hopeful. When I could do nothing except spend day after day at the library in my house, the name of Carl von Clausewitz stood for the study of war, the name of Karl Marx for the study of revolution, and the name of Karl Barth for the study of theology.

It was against that background that I became deeply interested in Paul Abrecht's account of the work he was doing for Church and Society in the World Council, trying to help the churches to understand the implication of their presence as churches in the midst of rapid and revolutionary changes which were taking place in societies all over the world after the end of World War II.

When I terminated my active military service to my country in July 1959, I readily accepted the invitation of the Council of Churches in Indonesia to participate in its work in the area of church and society. Later on I was invited by Paul Abrecht to participate in the preparation of the 1966 world conference on church and society and in the leadership of the conference itself. In a way I entered the ecumenical house through the Church and Society door. I am therefore extremely happy to contribute this essay as a small token of my highest appreciation and deepest gratitude to the friend whom we are honouring through

this book, Paul Abrecht, whom we can aptly refer to as "Mr Church and Society".

Some biographical notes

Many Christians of my generation in Indonesia, born around 1920 under Dutch colonial rule, had a very meagre theological preparation to cope with the rapid and fundamental political and social changes which shattered the life of the nation after the Japanese occupation in 1942, followed by war and revolution from 1945. Of course, we had our traditional nurture in the church, but the churches themselves, with their missionary background under Dutch colonialism, were taken by surprise when all at once they had to face a totally new historical situation.

As an illustration, I would like to mention the case of three friends, all brought up in the Batak Church, who during the Japanese occupation took up the study of war and revolution in preparing themselves for what they expected to be a revolutionary period in the history of the country after the imminent defeat of Japan. After a prolonged study of revolutions, especially the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions, as well as the study of the theoretical and philosophical dimensions of war and revolution, they were captured by a new vision and a new dream of Indonesia's future. Their studies about war and revolution, however, were not matched by the study of theological literature relevant to the problems of liberation and justice. Such literature was totally unknown to them at that time. In the process they became more and more estranged from the church, which to their feeling only continued the old routine without showing any understanding for the emerging revolutionary ferment among the young generation.

After the proclamation of independence on 17 August 1945 two of the three friends became members of the socialist party. After the split in the party into a moderate and a radical wing a few years later, one of them, L.M. Sitorus, became the secretary general of the Indonesian Socialist Party until the banning of that party in 1960. The other, B.O. Hutapea, became the top theoretician and the director of the higher party school of the Indonesian Communist Party. After the party was banned in 1966 Hutapea led the last armed resistance of the party stalwarts and was killed in battle in 1968.

I was the third of the three friends. After the proclamation of independence I participated in organizing the armed forces for the fledgling Republic. In a way I became the theoretician of the army, both in the planning and the conduct of the people's war against the Dutch as well as in the negotiations which ultimately led to a peace agreement at the Round Table Conference in 1949 in The Hague, at which the Dutch recognized our sovereignty.

After the war for national liberation was finished successfully, I was appointed acting chief of staff of the armed forces at the tender age of 29. Later on I was confirmed as chief of staff of the armed forces of the Republic of Indonesia.

It was in that capacity that during the fifties a relationship of incompatibility developed between the late President Sukarno and his chief of armed forces. On this occasion it is irrelevant to delve into the nature of that relationship. Paul

Abrecht was referring to my rather confusing position during that time when he spoke about semi-confinement.

During those years of what Paul Abrecht saw as semi-confinement I came across the work of some theologians who made a deep impression on me. I have mentioned Karl Barth. But in fact the work of Reinhold Niebuhr left a much stronger impression on me as I rethought the national struggle for liberation and justice, in which I had been involved since the 1940s, in a theological perspective. Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*[1] provided me with the key in understanding the struggle for liberation and justice more realistically and at the same time more hopefully. It also gave me a fresh understanding of the modern West, which we had been fighting so hard but at the same time tried to emulate in many respects. We have learned the hard way that only by modernizing ourselves to a certain extent could we be in a position to liberate ourselves from the domination of the Dutch, one of the modern western nations.

It was against that background that I mentioned the three Karls during the conversation in 1959. The material produced by Church and Society, which I received from Paul Abrecht afterwards, was very helpful for me. I must confess though that my most profound introduction at that time to the social thinking of the World Council of Churches was the book written by Father Edward Duff, a Roman Catholic priest, *The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches.*[2]

A historical overview

When I entered the Council of Churches in Indonesia in 1960, the first thing I tried to do was understand the Christian presence in Indonesia against the background of Indonesia's history.

For about thirteen centuries, as the gospel spread from Jerusalem eastward to south India and westward to the whole of Europe, the main parts of Indonesia went through a process of cultural-religious transformation. In that transformation Hinduism and Buddhism, which reached Indonesia from the Indian sub-continent following the first century of the Christian era, became the official religions in a number of kingdoms and empires which rose and declined in various parts of the archipelago, mainly based on Java or Sumatra. During those thirteen centuries, Christian theological thinking in the West, including the main credal statements, became consolidated as a result of confronting the challenge of Greek philosophical thought. Parallel to that development church structures in the West became consolidated in analogy with the imperial Roman structures.

In the meantime, since the seventh century Islam had been spreading from Mecca to the east, to the west, to the south and to the north. When Marco Polo visited North Sumatra towards the end of the thirteenth century, he witnessed the presence of Islam at some trading centres. It seems that earlier some Nestorian Christians had settled at Barus in North Sumatra, but this did not have a lasting effect on Indonesian history.

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[1]New York, C. Scribner, 1942.
[2]London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1956.

The spread of Islam in Indonesia gave rise to Islamic sultanates centring around the main harbours, pushing Hinduism to the interior of Java. The climax in this contest between Islam on the march and Hinduism in retreat was reached when the court of the Majapahit Empire sought refuge on the island of Bali (comparable to the Kuomintang's retreat to Taiwan after World War II), abandoning Java to Islam. Although politically Hinduism had to leave Java, it remains strongly present in the cultural-religious sub-stratum up to the present day.

It was in such a situation, when the contest between Islam and Hinduism was not yet finally resolved, that the modern West appeared on the Indonesian scene.

Acquiring stimulants for renewal, among other factors through its encounter with Islam, western Christianity, which had become stagnant during the Middle Ages, developed a phenomenal dynamism. This historical process, now described as modernization, resulted in the emergence of the revolutionary modern West. Europe went through the Renaissance and the Reformation, followed by various revolutions, such as the French, the Industrial, the American, the Russian, and then the Second Industrial Revolution. This revolutionary modern West, itself continuously changing, dominated and exploited the rest of the world during the last 3-4 centuries. In the process it unified the world while exporting modernity throughout the globe.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come to Indonesia after they conquered Malacca in 1511. That was the time when the Reformation was about to start in Germany. The Portuguese established Christianity in its Roman Catholic form in Flores and in the Moluccas, which had not been Hinduized or Islamicized. There was a time when some remnants of the Hindu Empire of Majapahit in East Java tried to enlist the support of the Portuguese in Malacca against Islam. Everywhere the Portuguese considered the Muslim sultanates as their main enemy. For the Portuguese the Muslims in Indonesia were just "Moors" whom they had fought in the Iberian peninsula. They came to Indonesia with the mandate from the Pope to spread Christianity, and also with the aim of trading directly with the spice islands by circumventing the areas controlled by Muslims.

Due to the presence of the Portuguese and later on of the Dutch in Indonesia, there was no opportunity for an Islamic Empire to play a central role in Indonesian history comparable to the role previously played by the Hindu Empire of Majapahit and earlier by the Buddhist Empire of Sriwijaya. For that reason, and also because some parts of Indonesia were never Islamicized and because especially in Java the pre-Islamic cultural-religious substrata proved to possess a great resilience, the Islamicization of Indonesia has remained an unfinished business.

The Dutch came to Indonesia towards the end of the sixteenth century, when the war between Reformed and Roman Catholic Christianity in Europe was still going on. The Dutch came not primarily to confront Islam, like the Portuguese, but to fight against the Portuguese and to establish direct commercial relations with the indigenous population.

The Dutch defeated the Portuguese in Indonesia and in the surrounding areas with the capture of Malacca in 1641. Though they were not as zealous in spreading their faith as the Portuguese, they converted the Roman Catholics among the population in the Moluccas to the Reformed form of Christianity.

Reformed theology, which developed in sixteenth century Europe as a correction to Roman Catholicism, tried to release the vitality of biblical faith by liberating it from captivity to Greek philosophical thought; and in the process it related itself, both critically and positively, to the rational modern world-view, which was gradually permeating European thought following the Renaissance. This dialogue between Reformed theology, which at a later stage was joined by Roman Catholic theology, and modern thought is still going on. It is questionable whether the Indonesian Christians in the Moluccas, when they were converted by the Dutch from Roman Catholicism to the Reformed creed, had much notion about the difference between Roman Catholic and Reformed theology.

Dutch commercial, naval, military and political control of Indonesia was established by stages during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Originally Christianity among Indonesians was confined to some areas in East Indonesia and among the Dutch as part of a state church. At that time Christianity was enough rooted in the Moluccas that, when after the British inter-regnum in Indonesia during the Napoleonic period there was a people's rebellion against the Dutch, it had Christian overtones. When the leader of the rebellion, Pattimura, had to leave Saparua, he left the Bible on the pulpit of the church, opened at Psalm 17, with the ringing opening sentence: "Hear, Lord, my plea for justice", as a communication to the invading Dutch commander that he was fighting for justice. In his own way Pattimura was doing theology of liberation and justice in the Indonesia of his time. When I was invited to preach in the church of Saparua about fifteen years ago, I naturally took Psalm 17 as my text.

During the nineteenth century the Dutch firmly established their rule throughout the whole of Indonesia, in the period when the Netherlands, as part of western Europe, entered fully into the industrial capitalistic era. It was also during that period that missionary societies from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands brought the gospel primarily to those parts of Indonesia which formerly were not Hinduized or Islamicized and, to a lesser extent, also to West Java, Central Java and East Java, which have been officially recognized as being Islamicized. However, the areas of Indonesia which were considered to be fanatically Muslim were closed by the Dutch colonial power for missionary work.

The foundation for the ecclesiastical map of Indonesia as we know it today was laid during the nineteenth century. That was the century when industrial capitalism brought about a transformation of western European society, giving rise to the socialist movement as a reaction and correction, with Marxism as its most radical expression. Christian theology in western Europe as a whole was not then ready to face the challenge of socialism, especially in its Marxist form. Pietism stressed personal salvation and charity in the face of the cry for social justice. Most of the missionaries who came to Indonesia during the nineteenth century brought with them a pietistic understanding of the Christian faith. Many of them saw the establishment of "folk churches" as the aim of mission, as manifested in the emergence of ethnic churches in Indonesia. Except for a few more mystically inclined figures within Javanese Christianity, we have no record of theological development among the Indonesian Christians in the various folk churches. One of the reasons may be the lack of theological training. Indonesians

who were ordained at that time were only acting as assistants to the European missionaries. While in many cases the ethnic languages were used in the folk churches, there was in general a very reserved attitude, if not suspicion, with regard to other expressions of the ethnic cultures, like dance, music, etc.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw, on the one hand, the end of the last wars against the Dutch based on local pre-modern nationalism in Aceh, in the Batak countries and in Bali. On the other hand, there was the beginning of a modern nationalist movement. Initially it was pioneered by students of the medical school at Jakarta and later on by regional ethnic youth movements, which in 1928 were integrated into one overall Indonesian youth movement. It was the youth of Indonesia who in 1928 declared the Indonesian language to be the national language for the whole country. The efforts to keep together the Nationalist, the Islamic and the Socialist expressions of the modern Indonesian nationalist movement culminated in the proclamation of a sovereign republic based on the Pancasila or the Five Principles of statehood, on 17 August 1945, two days after the Javanese surrender. Those Five Principles are belief in God, humanity, nationalism, democracy and social justice.

From the very beginning Indonesian Christians participated in the nationalist movement. In the regional youth movements as well as in the overall Indonesian movement, young Christians played an active role. However the churches, or rather the proto-churches, which at that time were still under missionary leadership, had a tendency to keep aloof from the nationalist ferment. Some young Christians who took part in the nationalist movement became alienated from their church. Most of the church leaders at that time were not able to develop a theological understanding of the national awakening. Nevertheless, the spirit of nationalism gradually permeated the thinking of ordinary Christians, and the churches could not just continue their life under missionary leadership as if nothing had changed.

Three things happened in that situation. First, there were missionaries who were able to read the signs of the time, like Hendrik Kraemer, who in the 1930s proposed the formation of autonomous churches under indigenous leadership. In terms of theological thinking, creed, liturgy, etc. in most cases the autonomous churches just continued what they had received from the missionaries. Autonomy was primarily an organizational matter, without much theological reflection. For the first time there was an institute for higher theological training in Indonesia, when the Higher Theological School was opened in Jakarta in 1934. Though the entire faculty consisted of European missionaries, there was from the beginning a conscious effort to teach what was called theology *in loco*. The author's impression is that what was taught was the old missionary theology with a sprinkling of Barthianism.

Secondly, there was the emergence of a new generation of Christian leadership in the Student Christian Movement, including Dr Mulia, Dr Leimena, Dr Tambunan and Amir Syarifudin among many others. These were convinced nationalists and at the same time active Christians. The most political among them was Amir Syarifudin, who at one time became Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia. Later on he was killed in one of the armed political conflicts which marred the early history of the Republic. This generation, though

they were not professional theologians, started to develop the beginning of a theological understanding of the nationalist movement and the role of Christians in a plural society like Indonesia.

Thirdly, there was the beginning of ecumenical, especially Asian, contacts for the Indonesian Christians, apart from the old missionary links, through the Student Christian Movement and through participation in the Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram (1938) missionary conferences.

It was in such a situation that the Japanese occupied Indonesia in 1942. This three-and-a-half year period of Japanese occupation constituted a "moratorium" for the Indonesian churches, in the sense that all contacts between the churches and their mission boards were totally cut off. Confronted with great challenges, the churches proved to have enough resilience to live through the years of occupation.

Then came the birth of the Republic and the struggle for survival, followed by the painful years of growing up, a process which is still unfinished. The proclamation of independence was followed by war, revolution, nation-building and development.

There was not much theologizing when Christians in Indonesia supported the proclamation of independence. At one time the Christian political party issued a statement that freedom was God's gift to the Indonesian people. But as a whole the churches did not consider it necessary to develop a theological rationale for their support of the struggle for national freedom.

From the beginning the Christians took part fully in the process of formulating the Pancasila or the Five Principles of statehood. It was primarily a result of Christian insistence that there should be no discriminatory treatment of any group that seven words in the original draft of the preamble of the constitution, which would have made it imperative for Muslims to abide by the Shariah, were dropped a few hours before the ratification of the constitution on 18 August 1945. Without much theological reflection, the Christians in Indonesia from 1945 on were protagonists of equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of creed, race and ethnic origin, as expressed in the Pancasila.

Practically no efforts were made to understand theologically the problems of war and revolution. Nobody developed a theology of a just war or a just revolution. Christians just joined. The participation of Christians in war and revolution was primarily based on national motivations. At one time there was a "Christian" armed group. This participation strengthened the image of Christians as full members in the life and in the struggle of the nation. Towards the end of the war the churches contributed to the reconciliation between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Christians, the author of this essay included, played a role in the negotiations towards the final peace with the Dutch. In general, we can say that many Indonesian Christians were actively involved in the struggle for freedom without doing much theology, because at that time most Christians were not adequately equipped to reflect theologically on historical, social and political problems.

After the war for independence the country was confronted with the urgent task of nation-building. The churches, which in the past were separated, having their own life as ethnic churches related to their respective mission boards, now

realized that they had a common destiny and a common task in a country working for a better future as one nation. In such a situation the Council of Churches in Indonesia or DGI (Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia) was founded in May 1950, with the aim to establish one Christian church in Indonesia. Two streams of thought converged in the birth of the DGI. One was ecumenism, which was brought back by representatives of the Indonesian churches who attended the WCC founding Assembly in Amsterdam (1948). The other was national consciousness, in the sense that the ethnic churches were being called to grow into one church in order to express together the Christian presence in the nation.

We can say that with the establishment of the DGI the churches in Indonesia entered into a common history. Although their separate histories have not yet been totally channelled into the common history, the churches have nevertheless tried to see themselves as together being the church in Indonesia, as part of the church in the wider oikoumene. In a way Indonesian church history started in 1950, preceded by the separate histories of the various churches. Has this common history of 32 years yielded insights which could be helpful for the churches in Indonesia in facing the future?

Originally there was hope that the country would soon settle down after the end of the war for national liberation in 1949. But Indonesia, like many other countries, had to experience that a people's war leaves behind a long and turbulent aftermath. There was the separatist rebellion led by former colonial soldiers, the long armed struggle against Muslim fanatics, the conflict with the Dutch about West Irian, the constitutional contest between the Pancasila and the concept of an Islamic state, the communist threat, the failure of the party system and the increasing role of the army in maintaining unity and stability.

Since the fifties, most of the churches in Indonesia have tried to understand their mission by using the WCC concept of unity, witness and service. In line with the WCC approach at that time, studies were conducted about the various confessional backgrounds and the different structures and liturgies of the churches, as well as about the "non-theological factors" which had conditioned their historical development. The concept of the responsible society, developed at the First Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam, was creatively used by the churches in Indonesia to develop their contribution to the thinking of the nation which, in the implementation of the Pancasila, was suspicious both of the dangers of communism and the excesses of capitalism.

The second part of the fifties brought the contest between the Islamic concept of statehood and the Pancasila state during elections and during the debates in the constituent assembly. For Christians it raised the theological task of understanding the nature of the state and its ideology and the problems related to the living together in one state of people belonging to different religious beliefs. Those questions are still basic problems for the churches in Indonesia today.

The Christian presence in Indonesia's "long march"

When I started to take part in the Council of Churches in Indonesia around 1960, there was a "great debate" going on among Indonesian Christians about the right attitude towards the government. President Soekarno had introduced "guided democracy" and whipped up revolutionary fervour demanding loyalty

"without reservation". There were Christians who supported the President, arguing that the alternative would be either an Islamic Indonesia, a communist Indonesia or a break-up of the country. Others joined the opposition as a prophetic act against what they considered to be dictatorial trends and the suppression of democratic political rights. The issue came to a climax when an armed rebellion broke out in some parts of Sumatra and Celebes (Sulawesi). There were Christians both in the government of President Soekarno and in the leadership of the rebellion.

Against that background a theological stance gradually emerged, which basically tried to understand Indonesian history in terms of revolution and in the light of a more dynamic and a more militant Christian concept of history, the belief that the kingdom of God had entered human history, including Indonesian history. It is present and active in history and will be revealed in its fullness in the new heaven and new earth where justice reigns, when all things will be made new.

Indonesian history was seen as a "long march", including the successive stages of Dutch rule, the unsuccessful local wars raged in pre-modern ways, the process of the gradual mastering of modernity during the nationalist movement, the war for national independence, nation-building, revolution and development. The churches have participated in this "long march", seeing that long march in the light and in the perspective of the kingdom. I took part in the debate, arguing that the church should avoid both total conformity as well as total irrelevance, taking as my starting point Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." It was in that light and in that perspective that the churches participated in the revolution positively, creatively, critically and realistically, trying to create signs of the presence of the kingdom by working for justice and wellbeing for all people. While participating in the "long march", the churches, themselves signs of the kingdom, should work for their renewal and unity and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all creatures.

Basically this theological framework of the churches in Indonesia, centring on the kingdom and the common mission of the church to witness to the presence of the kingdom in the "long march" of the nation, while working for their own renewal and unity, has not changed up till now.

Before the abortive communist coup in 1965 the country, the churches included, was facing the challenge of the communist ideology. Some churches issued statements on their attitude to communism. During the second half of the sixties the country left behind the rhetoric of revolution and entered into its development era in a post-revolutionary mood. The churches considered development as a continuation of the "long march" of the nation.

When the 1971 Seventh DGI Assembly in Pematang Siantar, Sumatra, discussed the Christian task in development, questions were raised why churches, whose mission was to proclaim the gospel, should be involved in development. On the one hand, these questions were an echo of the pietistic background of many churches. On the other hand, they reflected the evangelical-versus-ecumenical and the vertical-versus-horizontal debate, which had been imported to Indonesia from some western countries, especially from the USA.

In the face of these questions the Assembly asserted that the one mission of the church was to communicate the gospel of the kingdom. The question was then asked what the gospel was. The Assembly stated that the gospel was the good news about renewal and repentance offered to all people, together with justice, peace, welfare, in short "shalom", as willed by God for the world. With the inclusive statement about the gospel the churches in Indonesia rejected the imported dichotomy. Based on this statement on the mission of the church, the Assembly concluded that in the light of the gospel of the kingdom, the churches were called to participate positively, creatively, critically and realistically in the development process.

This participation in development should not be just a secular activity. This attitude was expressed in the theme "double wrestle" for a theological conference of the churches. On the one hand, the churches had to wrestle to understand the gospel in the context of the developing Indonesian society. On the other hand, the churches had to wrestle to understand the development process in the society in the light of the gospel.

This participation in development does not mean that the task to proclaim the gospel could be ignored or minimized. After some church buildings were attacked in 1967, there were proposals for inter-religious harmony on the condition that the churches refrain from bringing the gospel to people who already belonged to another religion. True to their missionary background, the churches stated: Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel to all creatures.

In the face of such tension and the existence of violent apologetic and polemic literature, especially between some Christian and some Muslim groups, the churches tried to develop a more mature and balanced relationship based on dialogue, cooperation or mutual witness. Up till now the theological position is still based on these three principles.

The Ninth DGI Assembly held in Tomohon (North Celebes) in 1980 looked into the prospect for the nation and for the churches during the eighties. The theme of the Assembly was "Your Kingdom Come", with the sub-theme, "The Holy Spirit Renews the Church to be a Witness in the Midst of the Struggle of the People".

This theme and sub-theme were in line with the basic theological thinking of the churches in Indonesia, trying, on the one hand, to understand the ongoing "long march" of the nation in the light of the gospel of the kingdom and, on the other hand, to stress that a faithful witness of the churches to the presence of the kingdom required continuous renewal under the power of the Holy Spirit and a more visible manifestation of their unity. In addition to renewal and unity the churches should also be built up, both in the sense of building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:13) and in the sociological sense with its managerial, economic, structural and other aspects. The Assembly spoke about the renewal, the building up and the unity of the churches with the stress on self-reliance in personnel, finance and theological thinking.

The Assembly considered the eighties to be a dangerous decade in the "long march" of the nation. On the one hand the Assembly noted with appreciation the positive results of the development era during the last fifteen years. There was remarkable progress in many fields, together with negative side effects. But the

main problem was considered to be the fact that, like many other developing nations, due to the breakdown of the parliamentary democratic system which was established after independence, Indonesia had to rely on a greater role of its bureaucracy, both military and civil, in order to maintain stability and to bring about economic growth.

The "modernizing bureaucratic state", although it may be a necessary period in Indonesia's "long march", contains dangerous potentialities for the future. The first danger is that the society may become increasingly more alienated from the government, leading to the overthrow of the bureaucratic state. This happened in Iran when the Shah was overthrown. The second danger is that the bureaucratic state, while successful in maintaining stability and bringing about industrialization, may become increasingly more militaristic and more totalitarian. This happened in Japan prior to World War II. The third danger is a prolonged period of instability and stagnation. This has happened in Latin America during the last 150 years.

How can Indonesia during the eighties avoid those three dangers and work out a better alternative? Here the Five Principles or Pancasila can be very relevant. These Five Principles emerged in 1945 as an alternative to the two contradictory and irreconcilable concepts of a national secular state and an Islamic state.

Due to the Five Principles, Indonesia was able to avoid a break-up of the country into separate states, as happened in the Indian subcontinent, which broke up into two and later into three separate states. The challenge for Indonesia during the eighties is to relate stability and economic growth to the implementation of the Five Principles, so that in the course of the progress in development there will increasingly be a richer religious and spiritual life, increasingly more respect for human rights and human dignity, increasingly more national solidarity and unity, respectively as an implementation of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth principles.

If we add the concern for sustainability, then we can consider these objectives as constituting the Indonesian version of the ecumenical concept of the just, participatory and sustainable society.

Can the churches in Indonesia participate in the efforts of the nation to meet the challenge of the eighties positively, creatively, critically and realistically by understanding that challenge in the light of the gospel of the kingdom? This implies the task to contribute to the thinking of the nation a greater realism and a deeper hope, based on the gospel but presented in a way which makes their intrinsic truth acceptable to the pluralistic society of Indonesia.

Christian Responsibility in the Political Economy of Africa

Adeolu Adegbola

In *The Churches and Rapid Social Change,* Paul Abrecht raised the question whether the churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America "are participating as fully as they should in [the] ongoing economic revolution, and whether they are able to think through the meaning of social justice in a world perspective".[1] Further:

> In the industrial revolutions of the West, the churches helped to provide both the ethos which made the modern economic system possible and then, somewhat belatedly, the concern for social justice which resulted in the Christian challenge to the evils resulting from the new system. What is the likelihood that a similar spirit of social responsibility will accompany and guide economic development in Asia and Africa?[2]

This question still arises twenty-three years later, particularly in reference to the churches in Africa, which are our concern here.

Paul Abrecht noted that the churches in the developing countries "have given more attention to economic than to political development", yet they "lacked any general theory of economic development, and their economic activities were always secondary to, and frequently only justified as a means to support, the work of evangelism".[3] He continued: "Consequently, many churches are today out of touch with the economic realities of these new nations. They are often still hoping for gradual change at a time when the pace of change is constantly accelerating."[4]

His conviction and credo, the operative guiding principle for his immense ecumenical activities, can be summarized in the following statement:

> In this situation, the churches have practically unlimited opportunities to contribute their insights into the spiritual and moral problems of man and society in the midst of economic change; insights which cannot be expected from any other group in society. In this enterprise these churches have the possibility through the ecumenical movement of drawing upon the experience and ideas of churches all over the world and of the ecumenical movement itself. Yet the actual economic problems in the countries of [these] younger churches are so vastly different from those which confront churches elsewhere that much new thinking on their part and on the part of the whole church is required before they can participate constructively in the new economic situation.[5]

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[1]New York, Doubleday & Co., 1961, p.133.
[2]*Ibid.*, p.141.
[3]*Ibid.*, pp.133-34.
[4]*Ibid.*, pp.137-38. For a collection of essays and documents reflecting new thinking on the economy of the developing countries, see Guy Erb and Val Kallab, eds, *Beyond Dependency: the Developing World Speaks Out*, Washington, DC, Overseas Development Council, 1975.
[5]*Ibid.*, p.141.

Concluding his observations on the economy, he suggested that "an adequate response to the demands for change will involve new institutions and a new understanding of what economic justice means".[6] Led by his insights on this subject, we present this proposal for a programme of "education" for justice and peace from the Centre for Applied Religion and Education based in Ibadan, Nigeria, an institution which has been largely inspired and emboldened by a long association, collaboration and friendship with Paul Abrecht in the ecumenical movement.

The first part of the essay gives an interpretation of the nature of the political economy of Africa. The second part sketches briefly the complicated and crisis-laden economic situation of the continent today. The third part examines the political strategies now being pursued. The last part then draws from current ecumenical insights to outline proposals for an agenda of Christian action towards economic liberation and justice for African peoples, and for social peace both locally and internationally among the nations. It is understood, of course, that while the focus in this presentation is on economic development, human and social development is a much wider concept especially for those who are called out so that people "might have life in all its fullness".

A dependent economy

It is unrealistic to study problems of the economy in isolation from political realities. Both are intertwined. Whether confessed or not, questions of ideology, literacy/illiteracy, the use of power, ethnic rivalries, international commitments, local or foreign schemes of economic imperialism affect trade and commerce. The circulation of money and the level of wages are controlled not by economic theoreticians but by politicians in government. Not only in Africa but all over the world, the struggle to get into government through the much-vaunted "democratic" electoral process is closely related to both individual and group ambition to occupy a position of access to the control of the economy. The national and international ramifications of this struggle raise issues of practical, moral and spiritual significance both for evangelistic witness and for Christian social ethics.

The whole of Africa is today dominated by a neo-colonialist system of government, capitalist in most cases, socialist in some. In the previous colonial situation of Africa, one country after another was made to enter into a client agreement with some European country on which the African country would depend for political, economic and military decisions. This arrangement of subjugation and dependency was sometimes made to seem less inhuman by various devices of "indirect rule" or "assimilation". Nationalist agitation in the years after World War II led to political independence, which included also a farcical economic and military independence. This means that the dependence relationship has been made to continue under a new guise.

In this explanation of the colonial arrangement, it is taken for granted that the economic factor was the centre-point and raison d'être for the political and military. Colonialism was a handmaid of the European Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. The fact remains, irrespective of whatever benefits came to Africans under colonial rule. European countries needed the raw materials

[6] *Ibid.*, p.148.

which Africa could provide. Europe still needs African oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber, sugar, tobacco, copper, timber, sisal and other such commodities. Without these, Europe's related industries would slack. Furthermore, both Europe and America today need markets for their products.

However, by an irony of history, the situation has been reversed against Africa, both during the colonial era and under the current neo-colonialist arrangements: Africa needs to export its crops and minerals. Africa needs imports from Europe and America. Africa needs modern technology, help for its agricultural and industrial performance, foreign exchange, balance of payments and debt moratorium. We are also told that Africa needs help for population control. The neo-colonialist arrangement is made to perpetuate this state of dependency.

In the neo-colonialist situation, a new political elite which is considered safe to protect the system is manipulated into power through a deceptive electoral process. The elite then pawns the national wealth and resources in the "free" international market. The government is made to subsist and maintain its existence by a complicated arrangement of intergovernmental "hire-purchase and credit cards". This inevitably leads to peonage in the case of the developing country. The result is economic suffering for the majority of the people. In order to control the passion of the people and prevent them from protesting, provision is made for a supportive use of sophisticated methods of repression and intimidation. All these are part of the bargain from the start. They form a "military aid" component in the arrangement which has no other objective than to perpetuate the economic dependence that started with colonialism and runs into neo-colonialism.

Admittedly, the term neo-colonialism is only relatively accurate in a number of cases, especially where there is no direct historical antecedence of colonial relationship between two particular countries. A typical example is the relationship of the United States of America with most of its client states. All the same, a distinction has to be made between colonialism, where the relationship of dependence was somehow imposed, and the neo-colonial relationship, where a so-called independent state is cornered by a manipulated historical necessity to accept a contractual relationship of dependence. Our contention is that, in every such case since the sixties, international capital has sucked away the wealth and resources of the smaller states, thus making it well-nigh impossible for such states to appropriate and reproduce such wealth for internal capital formation.[7]

What happens to the economic and social wellbeing of the masses is an issue of justice to which the churches cannot justifiably be blind or inactive. In such a situation, salvation includes a liberation from the grave crisis of economic strangulation and social peril to which the nations are subjected. The issues are complex. "Even the specialists are not sure where we are going. However, this does not mean that the church can continue to neglect these problems."[8]

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[7]See Archie Mafeje, "Neo-colonialism, State Capitalism or Revolution", in Peter C. Gutkind and Peter Waterman, eds, *African Social Studies: a Radical Reader*, London, Heinemann, 1977, pp.412f., pp.290-93.

[8]Paul Abrecht, "Issues for Christians", in Denys Munby, ed., *Economic Growth in World Perspective*, London, SCM Press, and New York, Association Press, 1966. See also Terence Ranger in Edward Fashole-Luke et al., *Christianity in Independent Africa*, London, Rex Collings, 1978, pp.479-502.

Africa's economic crisis[9]

In the 1960s a great number of African and Asian countries became independent of their previous colonial rulers. The economic and social development of these newly independent countries was a universal concern from the start. As a result, the United Nations Organization designated the years of the 1960s as a Development Decade (DD1). Succeeding decades have similarly been so declared, the 1970s as DD2 and the 1980s as DD3.

The rationale and objectives behind these Development Decades might be summed up in the words of the Preamble to DD2:

> On the threshold of the seventies, the governments dedicate themselves anew to the fundamental objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations 25 years ago *to create conditions of stability and wellbeing and to ensure a minimum standard of living consistent with human dignity through economic and social progress and development.* The governments designate the 1970s as the Second UN Development Decade and pledge themselves individually and collectively to pursue policies designed *to create a more rational world economic order in which equality of opportunity should be as much a prerogative of nations as of individuals within a nation.*[10]

The main objectives, which I have italicized above, can now be summarized in three parts. The first is the need for the achievement of peace and stability. This is not surprising since the quest for peace lies behind the UN itself. Apparently it was realized that lack of economic wellbeing was not going to be conducive to peace. Then, such wellbeing was defined by its least common factor, "a minimum standard of living consistent with human dignity". Thirdly, the need for a more rational economic order was felt. The criterion for rationality was stated as equality of economic opportunities among the nations.

By general consensus both DD1 and DD2 have been a failure. Action has not matched the words. Results have not caught up with the hopes. To the average observer, the result appears not to have been as dismal as is here suggested. But the average observer lives in the cities, the well-off parts at that, or moves from one airport to another. To those more familiar with the facts, of the thirty-one poorest countries of the world, twenty are in Africa south of the Sahara.

Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank during those two decades, reported that while the target set for the growth of per capita income in the 1970s was 3.5 percent, the growth rate in the poorest countries of the world was on average 1.7 percent. In fact, the figure for Africa was 0.2 percent. Growth in income for hundreds of millions of the very poor, who are already trapped at the bare margin of survival, was two to three dollars a year.[11] Is it not a tragedy that middle-class pastors and professionals of the churches, who enjoy a growth in income of 150-500 and higher per annum, have not felt deep compassion that very many millions of people, to whom we have a commitment to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, are the very poor? The scale of poverty in the world is an assault on the Christian conscience.

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[9]Tony Killick and Tony Addison, *Africa's Economic Crisis*, Overseas Development Institute Briefing Paper No. 2, London, 1982.

[10]UN document on DD2.

[11]Address to the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 1979. For a comparison with the state of the African economy in the early 1960s, see Walter Goldsmichalt, *The United States and Africa*, New York, Praeger, 1964, pp.115-86.

Turning from per capita income to agriculture, we find a most dismal record throughout DD1 and DD2. Agricultural production fell from year to year. Africa produces less and less to feed its teeming millions. Migration from the rural areas to the cities reduces the labour force in the farms. Those who remain in farming grow more cash crops for export than food crops. It is reckoned that the amount of foodstuff produced per head of population has fallen by some 20 percent since 1960. As a result, the amount of food imports rises steadily. Not only do African countries import foods not naturally grown in the region, they now import commodities which they produced sufficiently for themselves in the past, for example maize and rice. According to World Bank data, the price of eight African export crops plummeted between 1980 and 1981 by an average of 18.6 percent. At the same time, however, the price of imported crops rose by an average of 6.2. There is a loss to Africa in both exported and imported crops.

In the industrial sector, while there has been an annual increase of 3 percent in output during the 1970s, this is because industry started from a much smaller base than agriculture. The performance in respect of productivity growth, local processing, value added locally to the product and levels of profitability is lower in every regard than the average computed for the world's developing areas. Unemployment grows. There is also underemployment with an estimated average rate of 35 percent of the total labour force. It is predicted that with the trend of population growth over the next twenty years, developing countries will face an employment problem in the years towards 2000 A.D. that has no parallel in history. The present rate of industrial growth will not be able to mitigate such problems.[12]

The growth of industrialization and of the much discussed transfer of technology is tied to the arrangement of foreign "aid". The condition of "aid" is always such that the purchase of inappropriate goods from the industrialized countries becomes automatic. Africa has thus become a dumping ground for discarded out-of-date equipment, for which in many cases no spare parts are available. Such a situation of organized and perpetuated dependence naturally produces problems of over-valued exchange rates, balance of payments, and external debt.

The Club of Paris, an organization set up by western creditors to monitor debtor nations and rate their indebtedness, recently issued adverse reports on the serious nature of the debt of twelve African countries. Togo is, of course, a tiny West African country, but its external debt is said to be larger than its total Gross National Product! Zaire is virtually bankrupt and is completely at the mercy of its creditors, who have mercifully reorganized its debts five times over. Sudan, with all its agricultural potential, is also named. Wealthy oil-producing Nigeria is fast sliding into that inglorious company, pleading for International Monetary Fund loans, rejected, running round other potential lender nations, in the meantime being refused supplies of essential commodities by overseas trading companies, with industries closing down and the economy in the grips of a biting inflation. In this context, what does one say of Ghana, many of whose citizens have run to Nigeria for economic relief and have ruthlessly been expelled as "illegal aliens"!

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[12]See the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Development Reports for 1978, 1979 and 1980.

The social costs of this economic crisis are immense. Reference has been made to rural to urban migration. Regional economic migration is also illustrated by the Ghanaian situation. Unemployment is inevitable where agriculture has slowed down and industrialization is not growing. The growth of crime in such a situation should not be surprising. It is inevitable that economic hardship should lead to social discontent and loss of confidence in the government, especially where the economic depression has been intensified by corruption and wrong use of political power for individual gain. With social discontent may come, on the side of the government, the hardening of feelings, harsh rules, intimidation, abuse of human rights and, on the side of the people, moves towards abrupt and violent change of government. Africa has in the past decade seen many examples of every element in this scenario. Thus, the economic crisis has extended into a moral, social and political crisis.

Political strategies for survival

The churches in Africa, looking at the causes of the economic crisis, will need to give due attention to the dependence or centre/periphery theory which we have adopted in this essay. Failure to do this can be shown to be the weakness of the political plans of the past two decades.

We take the Lomé Convention first as a tailor-made prescription for the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). The Lomé Convention is a trade and aid pact between the European Economic Community (EEC) and 58 ACP states. Most African countries south of the Sahara are members of the Convention. Lomé I was signed in 1975 and was worth $5 billion spread over five years. It held out the prospect that the mix of aid and trade would help to diversify and strengthen the economic relations of the EEC and ACP countries. But because it was in fact "neo-colonialist" in intention and content, it failed inevitably to improve the economic status of the ACP partners. The aid flow proved to be slow, and the industrialization dreams were largely unfulfilled.

Lomé II was signed in February 1980. The negotiations were full of frustration for the ACP delegates. ACP ambassadors felt terribly insulted by the paternalistic attitude of some of the officials on the European side. What was finally signed could only meet the EEC objectives. The ACP negotiators were made to realize they were "beggars" in the contract. The EEC needed the raw materials from their countries and was ready to facilitate the supply. As such, while trade provisions were left virtually the same as in Lomé I, there were improvements made to the scheme for stabilization of export earnings (Stabex). A special new plan was introduced for mineral-producing countries (Minetex), but the relatively low sum budgeted for it suggested that it was only a fanciful scheme.

Lomé II has a budget of $7 billion, a seeming increase of more than 50 percent over Lomé I. In real terms, however, inflationary rates have reduced it to virtually the same level as the 1975 Convention. Also, most of the money will go to "aid" projects. There was not much provided for trade. In this regard, some of the ACP negotiators suggested that a stabilization of imports scheme (Stabim) needed to be included. Their EEC counterparts rudely turned

the suggestion down. Feelings were much hurt in negotiating Lomé II.[13] How much this will affect either implementation or succeeding negotiations remains to be seen.

From the angle of dependence theory, none of the other negotiations being carried on in common with other developing countries of the world can facilitate the survival of the economy and wellbeing of those nations. The Brandt Report at least emphasized that the survival of the countries of the north is tied to and depends upon the survival of the countries of the south.[14] This has not yet been interpreted to mean that a neo-colonialist international economic order will be insufficient to save the north itself. It needs to be complemented earnestly with a liberationist international economic system. This perspective needs to inform the ongoing discussions on the New International Economic Order (NIEO), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO I, II, III, February 1980), the World Bank strategies towards 2000 A.D., the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD I, II, III, IV, V, VI), to mention a few of the most prestigious discussions.

It is in the best interest of the developing world to seize and build upon the penitential confession of Raul Prebisch at the 1979 UNCTAD V in Manila. Prebisch, a brilliant economist and a veteran Latin American development strategist, was the Secretary General of UNCTAD when it first met in Geneva in 1964. His official policy line at that meeting advocated the transfer of resources from the developed world to the developing countries. At least two delegations sensed the inappropriateness of this proposal and clearly spelt out an alternative couched in the now well-rehearsed "trade not aid". They lost out. Prebisch won. Through fifteen succeeding years Prebisch watched how his regnant theory worked. He also had time to reflect on a previous fifteen years experience of development in his native Latin America. He knew that history had not supported his theory, at the cost of escalating penury for two-thirds of the world. At UNCTAD V in Manila, Prebisch admitted that the problems of development would not be solved by the sheer play of market forces. Of the previous fifteen years, he confessed, "we have lost the way and taken the wrong path".[15] The churches in Africa might play a role in leading the nations to that kind of conversion experience in the search for the right approach to the problem of underdevelopment.

As an instrument in this enterprise, there is a strategy proposal which is alternative to those we have mentioned above. It is the so-called "Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000". The LPA came out of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) economic summit which met in Lagos in May 1980. The then UN Secretary General was there. In his speech, he voiced his own disappointment with the efforts to establish a new international economic order. He put the blame on a lack of political will on the

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[13]See "Lomé: Agreement amidst Dissent", *New African*, London, August 1979, pp.73f.
[14]Willy Brandt et al., eds, *North-South: a Programme for Survival*, London, Pan Books, 1980.
[15]Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu, "Second Thoughts on UNCTAD V", *New African*, August 1979, pp.70f.

part of the industrialized countries, and he pointed to the direction which might be taken. Said he:

> The fact is all too evident that the African countries confront an international economic system which is chronically unbalanced and inherently unstable. Faced with this system, their economic options cover only a very narrow range.... If the highest political leadership of Africa can evolve an integrated standpoint on these issues, with due regard to what can realistically be achieved, it will make a very important contribution to the success of the global negotiations.

The Lagos Plan of Action is a long comprehensive document. A few of the most outstanding proposals emphasize:

— collective self-reliant and self-sustaining development;
— a drive towards self-sufficiency in food production;
— the better transfer of more appropriate technology;
— African energy conservation and expansion;
— inter-African trade and economic integration;
— improved transport and communication between African countries, to assist horizontal trade links;
— better collection and collation of statistics;
— an African monetary fund to supplement or replace the IMF.

As the world has come to expect from the veteran developmental theorist among African heads of state, President Julius Nyerere's speech was laden with pithy sayings:

> It is the people of Africa who must fight the poverty of Africa. It is absurd that Africa should be importing food. We should not be having to import from Europe or America the things we can provide ourselves. National development is not enough, it has to be part of a wider African experience. We cannot have 50 iron and steel complexes in Africa. Our choice is of priorities, everything needs to be done but not everything can be done at once. It is not a question of concentrating on essentials rather than luxuries, but of choosing which essentials are the more urgent. We must resist the temptation to set up new all-African institutions. Instead, ways should be found of coordinating and developing regional institutions.

And furthermore:

> It is becoming a regular thing for African states to dishonour their obligation to African institutions or other African states. We sometimes appoint to regional organizations senior executives with proven incompetence. We must recognize that in undertaking economic cooperation we are engaged in serious work.

All these are wise, honest and apposite words which deserve the attention of African church leaders in their missionary responsibilities and ecumenical relationships.

Ecumenical strategies for survival

Why do we urge the churches to back up, and mobilize themselves to work for, the accomplishment of the OAU Plan of Action? The ecumenical study conference in Thessalonica, Greece, in 1959, organized by the Department on Church and Society, reminded the churches:

> Injustice in the unequal division of the world's wealth cannot be corrected merely by protest, nor by the work of a few men. It requires patient, continous study of the complicated facts and actions at many different levels involving individuals, business, government, voluntary groups, intergovernmental organizations, churches. In all these, Christians have some part to play.[16]

In the OAU Plan of Action, the African governments, for the first time since independence, have laid down a well-considered and long-term policy for the economic development of the continent. Forces from outside are trying to compel them to abandon the Plan written *by themselves* in place of an Agenda for Action which has been written *for them*, not even with them. This "for them" document is the 1981 World Bank report on "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa", with an Agenda for Action.[17] Every sort of pressure is being used, political, diplomatic, commercial and monetarist, to compel African countries to abandon the OAU Plan and adopt the IBRD Agenda. But the Agenda is known to be of the same genre as UNCTAD I, II, III, IV, V, VI, which have failed. So at the 38th session of the OAU Council of Ministers in February 1982, the Council adopted a resolution which indicated the inconsistency of the Agenda with the Plan and strongly urged a common African position against the Agenda. This situation demands that all the forces in Africa which are listed in the 1959 Thessalonica report ought to be mobilized together to accomplish the Plan of Action.

The emphasis on self-reliant development in the OAU Plan of Action is its strength, just as the central element of "dependence" in the IBRD Agenda for Action is its greatest weakness. The greatest injustice ever done to any colonized people is the denial of their right to take direct and full responsibility for their own destiny. They have been used simply as tools for the development of other people, no matter what small incidental crumbs of "development" benefits have dropped down into their laps in the process. The first criterion with which to test the validity of any strategy for their recovery or survival is how far that right can be restored. This first rule of development has to be consciously adopted by the churches in Africa and ardently taught to the people, in particular on questions of individual personal development, national development, even ecclesiastical development.

In this last regard, churches have to give full scope in their own lives for the initiative and active involvement of the laity, women, youth, children, the disabled, the poor and the disadvantaged. That experience can thus become a practical lesson learnt in the fellowship of the church and applied in the larger society. The wider and the more varied the opportunities for participation on any level, the greater will be the contribution to the development process. It is not going to be easy to conceptualize, to practise or to teach, for society has been organized so much on the dependency model in religion, education, government, international relations, commerce, medical administration and other areas. A conversion and converting process has to be gone through.

In a significant article under the title "Why Politics Became a Dirty Word",[18] Basil Davidson takes a retrospective and prophetic look at Ghana, analyzing

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[16] *Dilemmas and Opportunities: Christian Action in Rapid Social Change*, Geneva, WCC, 1959, p.73.
[17] See also the report of the UN Committee for Development Planning, 1979, UN document A/AC. 196/1/CRP. 5.
[18] *West Africa*, London, 26 April 1982, pp.1121-24.

what has been wrong in Ghana politics since independence, explaining what is not being attempted under Rawlings and proposing where the hope for the future lies for Ghana. Because of the relevance of his analysis to other African countries and also to church administration in the same territories, we quote here brief extracts from the article.

The first extract suggests where things went wrong with Ghana:

> A post-colonial process of continued social and economic change — a large restructuring of society along with a large extension of the people's control of society — was altogether necessary to Ghana's progress, and even to Ghana's viability... Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party failed this because they tried to do it "from above". The people... became spectators of their own fate, and were shoved ever more rudely off the field of participation in deciding what that fate would be.

The proposal as to which way forward follows naturally from this perceptive analysis.

> What must now be done... is to restore the people to the centre of the field of participation. It is to abandon playing at politics "from the top down", and begin working at politics "from the bottom up". Those who understand this, and mean to achieve it, are those who will raise Ghana from its plight.

We have linked the churches in Africa with the pathetic failure in effecting appropriate social change since independence and since the church autonomy which in most cases followed the political sovereignty. How can the churches help in the struggle for government "from the bottom up" if this has not become a deliberate administrative principle in their own lives?

The past decade or more has seen a lot of activities to understand and practise this principle across the world. Management theories and organizational studies have discovered the dynamic and significance of the small group. The "basic Christian communities", which have become a means of liberation in Latin America, have influenced developments in some Roman Catholic dioceses in Africa.

The World Council of Churches not only embarked on a "participating in change" study before its Fifth Assembly in 1975 but has continued the same in the "participation in development" study and experiments which it has encouraged in different parts of the world, and in the ecumenical team visits prior to the Sixth Assembly in Vancouver in 1983. The idea has generated activities in development projects, evangelism, and congregational renewal. Its educational methodology has been developed and is being applied in many areas, such as conscientization, people's education, and theological education by extension. The late Bishop Colin Winter has bequeathed to us in his last published book, *The Breaking Process*,[19] his vision of a truly transformed church serving as an instrument of the people. This is part of what the RECAP programme is planned to do towards both the renewal of the church and the transformation of society.[20]

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[19]London, SCM Press, 1981.

[20]The Centre for Applied Religion and Education (P.O. Box 9270, Ibadan, Nigeria) promotes a Renewal Course for African Progress (RECAP), an interdisciplinary "theological education" programme for church renewal and social transformation.

Indeed, underlying and running through both the OAU Plan of Action and the IBRD Agenda is the concern for poverty and suffering. But an awareness of the grim reality is not easily come by. Traditionally, in practice, the poor themselves cultivate a culture of silence, sometimes with the support of religious and moral concepts of fate, predestination, sanctified suffering, patience and the like. The better-of, on the other hand, contentedly rejoice in the knowledge of providence, divine favour, work ethic and the reward of work, all of which is sometimes socialized into acts of "charity" which may even degenerate into condescending paternalism. Unless the churches in Africa wake up to the reality of poverty in the society around, and in self-examination have their own conscience aroused, the whole ecumenical discussion on opting for the poor may completely pass us over. A careful task of "conscientization", in the double sense hinted at in the preceding sentence, thus becomes part of the preliminary process of backing the OAU Plan of Action.

The need for basic research and for both ethical and theological reflection also has to be met. For example, the IBRD Agenda for Action grew out of the context created by the moral sensitivity of Robert McNamara, the past president of the Bank, and his evident option for the poor loudly declared during the 1970s in particular. So the Agenda is a sign of "solidarity" with the poor attested to by World Bank projects across the world. Surely now, there must be some unacceptable types of solidarity. A useful contribution might come out of reflection on the difference between the Plan and the Agenda for the solidarity debate in the World Council of Churches.

Action proposals have been left until now. There are many situations where critical reflection has to precede action. This is one of them. The process called for here is reflection-action-reflection-action... Proposals for action are many in the Plan itself. They have to be interpreted in terms where the role of non-governmental organizations will be clear. There is immense help available in the ongoing discussions in the ecumenical movement. What Paul Abrecht said about "the possibility through the ecumenical movement of drawing upon the experience and ideas of churches all over the world and of the ecumenical movement itself" is now becoming evident.

It is not difficult to demonstrate the resources in the ecumenical movement from which churches in Africa might draw to facilitate the implementation of the OAU Plan of Action. Examples are now given of the review of the project system; women in rural development; young peoples in search of a new society; urban-rural mission; the Christian Medical Commission; people's technology; energy for my neighbour; the search for a just, participatory and sustainable society; the role of transnational corporations; ecumenical sharing of personnel and of other resources; giving account of the hope that is in us; the common affirmation on mission and evangelism; church-related educational institutions programme; the programme on theological education, and many others. A number of valid and viable country programmes can be made from an assortment of a number of these studies.

The 1983 Assembly of the World Council in Vancouver, responding to an assessment of ten years of development education, urged that a programme of development education be intensified, particularly now in the developing coun-

tries. It further recommended that the term "education for peace and justice" might better be used to describe the work that now needs to be done. Happily enough, an increasing number of organizations have chosen to give education a very wide scope, including study and action, in formal and non-formal settings. In this sense the contribution of the churches to the implementation of the "OAU Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000" might well be a "Programme of Education for Peace and Justice".

A last quotation from Basil Davidson will emphasize this further:

> Those who now seek to build a political and social — yes, and cultural — movement of renewal from the sinews of village life, from the heart of town quarters, from the guts of local government, from the confidence and energy of "ordinary people" from every kind of representative committee, cooperative, or assembly of citizens — are those who will be thanked.

What structures do we need to accomplish this? The existing ones to start with. The All Africa Conference of Churches might coordinate it, working in active cooperation with the churches and the national councils of churches, with the urban-industrial rural mission and CCPD African networks and the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa, with the Conference of African Theological Institutions and the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians, and with such organizations as the Christian health associations of the various countries where such have not been part of the national Christian councils. Selected organizations, institutions or committees — at least one each in western, eastern, central and southern Africa — might be given responsibility to facilitate and expedite action on the sub-regional levels. Thus will the churches in Africa be able to participate more fully in the vast ecumenical processes of evangelistic confession, learning, participation, sharing, healing, reconciliation, unity and expectancy for fuller development in Africa and in the wider world towards 2000 A.D.

The Economic Debate in the Ecumenical Movement

Julio de Santa Ana

Economic problems have always been causes for reflection by churches and theologians. Questions relating to the distribution of income, the meaning of work, money and wealth, are present in the Bible. They have occupied a permanent place on the agenda of those who try to be faithful to God and Jesus Christ, searching for the unity of Christians and of the whole of God's people.

During the last thirty-five years a distinguished personality in the debate over these questions has been Paul Abrecht. The impact of his work goes far beyond economic questions: it reveals the thinking of a perceptive theologian thoroughly preoccupied with the ethical problems confronting the churches and with the challenges of the whole inhabited world to the Christian faith and its social meaning.

Lately several significant contributions to the economic thinking of the World Council of Churches have been written.[1] Thomas S. Derr, in one of his writings, warns about the difficulty in generalizing that the WCC has "an economic thinking". Yet the WCC continues the risk of venturing into issues of economic responsibility.[2] Keeping this in mind, I think that instead of speaking about an "economic thinking" of the WCC, it will be more adequate to speak of the economic debate in the ecumenical movement. I believe that in this way justice can be done to the great variety of opinions and tendencies encountered in this debate. The ecumenical movement, the WCC being its most characteristic expression, expresses the multitude of the oikoumene. In this sense, its reflections on economic, political, social, cultural and even theological matters cannot be reduced to one single orientation. In order to be faithful to this world's complexity, uniting so many cultures, so many different points of view with their respective *Weltanschauungen*, the WCC does not intend to define an ecumenical view on economic questions, but provides a basis for a dialogue of different cultures on equal terms,[3] opening space for alternatives (a rarity in our present

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[1]Martti Lindqvist, *Economic Growth and the Quality of Life*, Helsinki, Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1975. See also article by Thomas S. Derr, "The Economic Thought of the World Council of Churches", *This World*, winter/spring 1982, No. 1, pp.20-33.

[2]*Op. cit.*, p.21-22.

[3]The General Secretary of the WCC, Philip Potter, has insisted on many occasions on the role of the WCC, trying to achieve the unity of the human race, of the whole of God's people, through "a universal dialogue of cultures". Ecumenical does not mean accepting the hegemony of one culture, but creating conditions for a polyphony of traditions and world visions to emerge, corresponding to the rich plurality of the whole of God's people.

situation). The World Council and its predecessors in the ecumenical movement introduced the debate on economic questions into the life of the churches. In this process, it is worthwhile bringing to light the importance of the role of Paul Abrecht, a man with an open mind, capable of dialogue and of asking fundamental questions. He also had the genius of attracting to the ecumenical movement personalities who could debate these matters more openly, less tensely, less rigidly, than in other places where forums on these topics are also organized.[4] Paul knew not only how to bring these people together, but also how to perceive the fermenting element in their thinking. His mind has always been oriented towards the future, as is proper of those who are hoping for the realization of the kingdom promised by God to human beings.

Some history

Without rewriting the history of the social, political and economic thinking of the churches, we can remember some landmarks of the pilgrimage of the modern ecumenical movement in relation to the economic debate. We can recall the evolution of the Life and Work movement, culminating in the ecumenical conference of Stockholm, with Archbishop Söderblom as principal animator. A profound idealism marked the debates of this meeting — perhaps influenced by the promise of the kingdom of God. However, its reflections did not go beyond the limits of the western capitalist systems. But already at the Stockholm conference there began to appear one of the decisive orientations of the ecumenical movement on economic problems: "That human will must mediate the divine will in society, that human control must be asserted in the face of impersonal economic law, and that man must not be subordinated to property or to the industrial process."[5]

The years following the Stockholm conference were of great importance. In 1928, the International Missionary Council met in Jerusalem, where the ecumenical movement expressed its repudiation of racism as an expression of human sin. Already in Jerusalem, one could observe a great realism in the socio-economic and political debate. The years which immediately followed strengthened this new optic: on the one hand, the great economic depression, beginning in 1928, led to an awareness of the injustice implicit in the capitalist system. On the other hand, the violent appearance of totalitarian systems (Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany) showed the nature of Leviathian exemplified in the modern state. Nobody was therefore surprised that at the second conference of the Life and Work movement (Oxford, 1937), a major approach was achieved with trade unions and the International Labour Organization, tend-

[4]There are many, animated and invited by Paul Abrecht, who contributed to this debate. Without trying to mention everyone — which would be impossible — we remember Kenneth Boulding, Barbara Ward, André Philip, Jan Tinbergen, Denys Munby, Samuel Parmar, Raul Prebisch, Manfred Linnemann, Harry de Lange, Charles Elliott, C.T. Kurien, Jan Pronk, Diogo de Gaspar, James P. Grant, Theodor Leuenberger, Reginald Green, etc. These personalities — and others too many to list — have helped to forge a debate which has not stopped at the "world the way it is", but has tried to offer alternatives to our situation, not losing the vision of the future, including realistic expectations of change as well as the eschatological dimension.

[5]Thomas S. Derr, *op. cit.*, p.22.

ing to overcome the bourgeois imprisonment of the churches, especially in the West. Already then Marxism challenged Christians profoundly: the events of the Spanish Civil War, in one way or another, weighed on the disagreements at Oxford. The ecumenical movement began to discover that society is a field of conflicts *par excellence*, and that these conflicts indicate serious contradictions between economic and social interests. The war of 1939-1945 gave powerful evidence of those conflicts.

The years of war deferred realization of the decision of the Life and Work and Faith and Order movements to unite forces in the creation of the World Council of Churches. But in 1948, in Amsterdam, the First Assembly of the WCC materialized. It was the time of the "cold war", of hard ideological confrontations between liberalism and communism, which were shaking the churches. On this occasion the ecumenical movement took positions on social matters as an agent trying to realize a "responsible society".[6] The moral basis of the concept also indicates how the process of economic growth has to be started. This orientation was also maintained during the Second WCC Assembly (Evanston, 1954), at which it was decided to start a programme of the churches "in areas of rapid social change", culminating at the Third WCC Assembly (New Delhi, 1961). During this whole period the concept of "responsible society" was the key for understanding the ecumenical approach to economic problems. The "responsible society" appeared as a different option between capitalism and socialism. Summarizing this perspective, Paul Abrecht wrote in 1961:

> Christians seek economic development which promotes human welfare. Should they support the western pattern of state-regulated private enterprise capitalism? Or a completely state-controlled economy patterned after Russian communism? *Or is there a third way?....* The ecumenical movement has given much attention to questions of economic ideology and organization since 1937, and it has been agreed that the goal of Christians must be a responsible economic order. *The meaning of this has been set forth in the statements on social questions of the first two assemblies of the World Council of Churches, which favoured a large measure of private enterprise but with government planning and regulation.* However, these statements tended to reflect predominantly the discussion among Christians in the western industrial countries, and the ecumenical movement has yet to define the meaning of the responsible society in areas of rapid social change.... It seems inevitable, therefore, that in these countries a responsible society must involve a larger measure of state control and direction of economic life than would be deemed desirable in the West, in the opinion of many Christians.[7]

This statement helps to clarify several issues. First, the western frame, which conditioned the ecumenical debate between 1948 and 1961, began to be replaced towards the end of this period. This was to a large extent the result of the programme conducted by Paul Abrecht in the WCC Department on Church and Society, on "The Common Christian Responsibility Towards Areas of Rapid

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[6]According to the definition reached in Amsterdam, "a responsible society is one where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility to justice and public order, and where those who hold political authority or economic power are responsible for its exercise to God and the people whose welfare is affected by it". In *Ecumenical Documents on Church and Society* (1925-1953), Geneva, WCC, 1954, p.130.

[7]*The Churches and Rapid Social Change*, New York, Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1961, pp.144-45 (italics mine).

Social Change". This programme culminated in a conference at Thessalonica, Greece, in the summer of 1959,[8] in which one could already observe an increasing impact of the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America on the ecumenical debate.

This major ecumenical dimension was confirmed after the New Delhi Assembly when the Orthodox churches, and many more churches of the third world, became members of the Council. From this moment the second important element appears clearly in the life of the ecumenical movement, to which Paul Abrecht points in the passage just cited: it is impossible to generalize about the world situation. Different situations demand different approaches to different actions. In other words, since the New Delhi Assembly the western churches can no longer tell the others what they should do. From this moment on considerable respect emerged for the churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific, in contrast to the predominant tendencies in the economic debate in international forums, especially in intergovernmental ones, where the dominant line was the perspective resulting from the meeting at Bretton Woods, when in 1944 a limited number of nations agreed on the basis for an international economic order.

These new tendencies of the ecumenical movement have been confirmed repeatedly. This was the case at the world conference on church and society (Geneva, 1966), organized by the Department on Church and Society, on "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time",[9] and at the WCC's Fourth Assembly (Uppsala, 1968), in which decisions were taken leading to the creation of new, very dynamic programmes, like the Programme to Combat Racism and the Churches' Commission on Participation in Development (CCPD), initiated in 1969 and 1970 respectively. The Department on Church and Society has, no doubt, the paternity of both programmes.

In the early 1970s, the reflection on the future of humanity began to emerge. The work of Church and Society, very sensitive to this question, flowed into a programme culminating in a new world conference (Bucharest, Romania) on "Science and Technology for Human Development: the Ambiguous Future and the Christian Hope".[10] This conference helped to prepare the statements of Section VI of the Fifth Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 1975), on "Human Development: the Ambiguities of Power, Technology and Quality of Life". From that basis the preparations were begun for a World Council conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" (Cambridge, Mass., USA, 1979),[11] whose fruits are still very fresh and rich for the development of the ecumenical movement. It is important to underline, in finishing this very short historical review, the role played by Paul Abrecht in this whole process since 1948. During these last years, emphasis was given to the work of Church and Society in two aspects, that influenced

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[8]*Dilemmas and Opportunities: Christian Action in Rapid Social Change*, Geneva, WCC, 1959.
[9]For this a special preparatory volume, edited by Denys Munby, was published: *Economic Growth in World Perspective*, New York, Association Press, and London, SCM Press, 1966.
[10]See *Anticipation*, No. 19, Geneva, Church and Society, WCC, November 1974.
[11]See the two volumes resulting from the work of this conference. Vol. 1, Roger L. Shinn, ed., *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Plenary Presentations*. Vol. 2, Paul Abrecht, ed., *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the Conference*. Geneva, WCC, 1980.

decisively the world economy of our time. One of them was the energy question; the other was the necessity for nuclear disarmament.[12]

Significant aspects of the debate

It is not possible, within the context of this paper, to make an exhaustive analysis of the economic debate in the ecumenical movement. I would like to expose, however, some aspects marking the uniqueness of ecumenical reflection on this subject.

THE ECUMENICAL APPROACH

It is very difficult to reflect on and to discuss economic questions at the international level. The different conferences organized by the United Nations — United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development, Economic and Social Council, etc. — have proved this. Nevertheless, the ecumenical movement could — especially during the past thirty-five years — reach certain positions of agreement, which are very different from those reached by intergovernmental forums. This is due in large measure not only to the common faith of those participating in the movement for Christian unity, but also to the method used for debating these questions. From a perception of the problems and their clear delimitation, a group proceeds generally to a quite profound investigation. This is done by a study community working in the form of dialogue, assuring an interdisciplinary and intercultural focus, permitting an alternation between various perspectives, without favouring any one in particular.

This approach provides a basis for a wider dialogue with church representatives. The objective is to offer elements permitting them better to define their respective positions vis-à-vis the problem. These elements usually reflect a certain consensus. That means that in an ecumenical approach nobody can be left out: in one way or another the positions of all those participating in the dialogue have to be taken into consideration. It is true that a clear consensus cannot always be achieved: many times the documents of ecumenical meetings express a collection of different viewpoints which cannot clearly be inter-related. Nevertheless, when the consensus reveals solidity and a common basis (which demands great efforts to listen to others and sufficient flexibility to work in a community of thinking), then the documents acquire a great capacity for impact on the churches. This was generally the case with different reports and books produced by the WCC on economic questions.[13]

THE MIDDLE AXIOM

Church representatives cannot always agree when debating questions challenging their common faith. It is known that they stem not only from dif-

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[12]See *Anticipation*, No. 29, November 1982, on "Alternative Energy Paths: Utopia or Reality". On nuclear disarmament: *Before It's Too Late,* report of a public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament, organized by the WCC in November 1981, Geneva, WCC, 1983.

[13]A good example is the document produced by the consultation on "Political Economy, Ethics and Theology: Some Contemporary Challenges", organized by Church and Society and CCPD in Zurich in 1978. See M. Arruda, ed., *Ecumenism and a New World Order: the Failure of the 1970s and the Challenge of the 1980s*, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp.7-25.

ferent denominations, but also from cultures with different orientations, expressing themselves in very varied languages. Despite this, and especially at moments of serious historic contradictions affecting all participants in the dialogue, the ecumenical movement has known how to create instruments approaching common concepts of great importance. This was already apparent in the economic debate at the Amsterdam Assembly. Martti Lindqvist has pointed this out, indicating the concept of "responsible society" as one of these middle axioms permitting the convergence of those from both the socialist and the capitalist world:

> The report on the work in Amsterdam makes it clear that the principle of justice implies the subjection of economic measures to social goals.... The view of the meeting was that the church is not in a position to solve the question of public ownership of the means of production, but that in any case ownership is not as such a source of corruption to human nature. On the other hand property must not be taken as an unconditioned right: its use is subject to the principle of justice. The concern for "little men in big societies" requires avoidance of unnecessary centralization in economic life as elsewhere. For the achievement of its main goals society needs a wide range of functioning small communities. In its consideration of the conflict between capitalism and communism the Amsterdam Assembly rejected both the latter and the laissez-faire principle. Communism stresses the principle of justice but at the same time represents a threat to human freedom, while its opposite, in seeking to preserve liberty, makes the mistake of assuming that free enterprise will inevitably produce justice.[14]

One of the last "middle axioms" coined by the ecumenical debate is the concept of "human development". The process can already be noticed in the final report of the Third Assembly in New Delhi, where it is said: "Economic expansion is essential, but not sufficient in itself. It is the whole man and not only a part of his personality or body that must be served."[15] This appeared even more clearly at the Fourth Assembly of Uppsala, using the concept of "being human" from the Geneva conference:[16]

> The Christian understanding of the human derives from the belief that Jesus Christ is the disclosure to us of both true God and true man. In him we see most clearly what it means to say that man is made in the image of God, that in his dealing with the material world the Christian is called to express the Lordship of Christ, and to do so with a sense of his solidarity with all men.[17]

There is a difference, however, between the "middle axiom" of the responsible society and that referring to "human development". The first is an intention to look for a third way *between* capitalism and socialism. The second, in turn, tries to overcome the concepts of economic growth offered to us by both systems. It is expressed in the proposal which, after the Fifth Assembly of the WCC in Nairobi, presents a new vision of the socio-economic-political order: "Towards a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society". A new paradigm in political economy is suggested, taking into account the historical and geographical dimensions of each society (i.e. avoiding the imposition of criteria). At the same time, it offers a holistic perspective on the economy as secondary to

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[14]*Op. cit.*, p.50.
[15]W.A. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report*, New York, Association Press, 1962.
[16]Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, p.49. "Development (is not something) which makes man the object of the operation of mechanical forces."
[17]*Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time*, report of the world conference on Church and Society, Geneva, WCC, 1967, p.52.

social and political problems.[18] This new paradigm is proposed as an alternative to models of economic growth that create injustice, imposing the modernization process on peoples and cultures.

It is evident that these "middle axioms" permit the overcoming of very great contradictions. They reveal an effort of imagination, of creativity at a theoretical level, of a thinking which goes far beyond dogmatic formulas presented by those who prefer to reason on the basis of known (and worn-out) criteria and logic. This has led to debate in the ecumenical movement about *Utopia*. At a time when economic problems are debated in intergovernmental forums and in academic circles on the basis of repeated formulas, the ecumenical movement at least ventures to imagine alternatives and to discuss them. This is surely not one of its least merits. It is perhaps because of this that it challenges so much those who nowadays are preoccupied with keeping the *status quo*.

THE IDEALISTIC TEMPTATION

The analysis of the WCC texts dealing with economic questions calls attention to two factors. First, the profoundness and sharpness with which situations are analyzed. It is the kind of reflection which combines the thinking of economists with important elements of ethics and, above all, with an evident sensitivity vis-à-vis the problems affecting the less privileged sectors of society. Secondly, and in contrast with the first, this analysis generally leads to a series of recommendations which very often do not fit into the horizon of possibilities open to the churches and to Christians.

Thus the rigor of analysis shows the great difficulties for the improvement of existing conditions. Demands emerge which, in order to be met, require a new situation, a new scenario. This is what I call *the idealistic temptation*.

An example is the report of the Bucharest conference on "Science and Technology for Human Development: the Ambiguous Future and the Christian Hope", which includes an excellent analysis of options, and their consequences, in respect to modern technology, but which contrasts with recommendations emphasizing that developing countries should practise self-reliance. In reality, this latter concept was never sufficiently illuminated in the ecumenical movement. Launched by President Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania, it had in the first place an ideological connotation: affirmation of the cultural and political self-identity of nations, especially of those nations which had won independence during the last decades, after having been tormented by colonialism. The term was taken up again in the ecumenical discussion. At the Montreux conference on "Ecumenical Development Projects" (January 1970), Samuel Parmar tried a first definition: it is not a question of financial self-sufficiency, but of being capable of exposing and following one's own ideas, counting on one's own forces.[19] This definition of Parmar brought more clarity to the debate, but did not help to avoid the idealistic temptation, especially when the idea of self-reliance is applied to technological options.

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[18]Cf. M. Arruda, *op. cit.*, pp.18-20.
[19]See Pamela Gruber, ed., *Fetters of Injustice*, Geneva, WCC, 1970.

We had to wait until the late 1970s when the Advisory Group on Economic Matters[20] started to meet, in order to partially overcome idealism. The AGEM insisted that technological options are made in connection with social options. That is, technological decisions are related to the kind of society to be constructed. Hence, before achieving self-reliance in technology, a nation must define the type of society to be moulded. This social option influences the technological options. Consequently, trying to be self-reliant in technology, without trying to overcome a nation's economic dependence, means falling into idealism. Fortunately, the AGEM's work has begun helping to overcome this temptation, which is so often evident in other texts of the economic debate in the ecumenical movement.

Tenacity on the path of understanding of how the churches have to meet the challenge of their societies; *originality* in the method followed by the ecumenical movement in discussing these matters; *creativity* in imagining alternatives when all paths seem to close and the vision to be lost — all these are matters which the ecumenical movement must not lose. Paul Abrecht, together with others, contributed widely to the shaping of these elements characterizing the work of the WCC. It is a legacy he leaves us. Those who follow have to cultivate it to see that it bears fruit.

[20]The Advisory Group on Economic Matters (AGEM) was called into being by the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD), and included among its members representatives of the working committee on Church and Society. It produced several reports, included in the series "Ecumenical Approach to Economics", published by CCPD/WCC.

Ecumenical Social Ethics for the Future

Harry M. de Lange

Ecumenical social ethics are mostly a reflection on changing human situations. The history of the ecumenical movement shows us the example in the Stockholm report of 1925 (a somewhat delayed answer to the consequences of World War I); the Oxford report of 1937 (with its profound thinking on the economic and political crisis of the 1930s); the Amsterdam report of 1948 (with a vision of the renewal of economic and political structures); the Geneva conference of 1966, together with the Uppsala Assembly of 1968 (with the extension of the responsible society to worldwide dimensions). Richard Dickinson recently published his excellent review on the development of this thinking and acting, in two brilliant chapters of his book, *Poor, Yet Making Many Rich*.[1]

I feel no need to clarify our position that ecumenical ethics mean social ethics. Dickinson clearly states:

> They are primarily concerned with how faithfulness may be more fully manifested in the corporate life of humanity. They are concerned primarily with structural and systemic justice. Without underestimating the importance of private morality, ecumenical ethics are more attentive to how faithfulness applies to political, economic and social institutions.[2]

The key-word here is the concept of *justice*. Ecumenical social ethics always was characterized by this concept, since the Amsterdam Assembly introduced the idea of the "responsible society" and certainly since the Nairobi Assembly defined the "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" (JPSS) as a creative and dominant concern.

Neither the responsible society nor the JPSS are conceived as finally formulated concepts. I fully agree with Dickinson when he writes that both are invitations

> to further exploration on the basis of already clear proximate, core convictions. [They are]... *not* fully integrated and developed doctrines, nor are [their] components harmoniously articulated. [They are]... not conceptions fully grounded... in biblical and theological reflections. [They are]... not blueprints for analysis or for setting up a new social order, presumably applicable to diverse socio-cultural and political situations.[3]

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[1]World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1983.
[2]*Ibid.*, p.61.
[3]*Ibid.*, p.129.

According to the report of the Evanston Assembly (1954), the responsible society is a criterion by which we judge all existing social orders and at the same time a standard to guide us in the specific choices we have to make. Justice was and is the basic concept. Maybe the word righteousness is better and more related to the Hebrew word *tsedagah*. *Tsedagah* is much more than just a word; it is a paradigm. It is primarily concerned with relationship, expressing community amongst human beings. It is not a juridical concept; it is a creation of the covenant community, a community of sharing life.

Many people have already indicated that both in the Old and in the New Testament "righteousness" is a relational word (see, for example, Philip Potter in his report presented to the Central Committee of the WCC in July 1982[4]). It signifies a permanent call to restore broken human relations, disturbed by individual sin and guilt and by particular economic and political developments. Significant for the biblical way of thinking is that justice is not a set of rules, but a way of living both with God and with others. Biblical thinking leads us not to the question: what is justice, but to the question: who acts justly? Too often Christianity has used the concept of righteousness to judge others rather than to learn how to live and act. The commandment is not: you should believe in God, but you should love God. Our problem is: are we willing to pay its price? What kind of price should be paid?

I conclude this small excursion with a quotation from the report of the first meeting of the JPSS Advisory Committee in Geneva, 11-14 December 1977:

> Justice has become the acid test of all engagement in society and the criterion of all possible programmes and strategies for society. Justice, in the perspective of the kingdom of God, is not a principle, an ideal value which will never be realized in social life. Rather, as the historical embodiment of love, it indicates a quality of relationships in community and a criterion for evaluating and changing social structures.[5]

For each generation, ecumenical social thinking has a different agenda, since it is always reflecting human situations. Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote that ethics is more a task of digging than a task of constructing plans for God's activity. His idea of the prior question was: what is going on? The answer (or better the answers) to that question cannot be given in simple individualistic tones. I hope that I can show this by mentioning three problem areas in which justice is at stake: poverty, ecology and work. I shall not deal with the biggest of all: peace. Although there is more than sufficient reason to bring this item into the ecumenical social ethics debate, it is not my particular field of study.

The significance of justice in the three fields is obvious. Nevertheless, I want to make a few observations on this point before I give a short description of the proper fields themselves.

Firstly, there is a tendency to replace the word justice by suffering in at least two of the three fields. We know that the human sufferings from hunger, misery and oppression are immense; the same is true in a great variety of working conditions and of the situation where people are unemployed. Nevertheless the

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[4]*The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, October 1982.

[5]The final text of the JPSS report has been published in *Perspectives on Political Ethics: an Ecumenical Enquiry,* ed. Koson Srisang, Geneva, WCC, 1983.

stimulus for reshaping societies to minimize suffering — as a process of humanization — comes from the concept of justice.

Can the ecological problem be covered by using the word justice? Here one can have some reservations, but I think it is acceptable if we add to the aspect of broken relations between people the broken relation to nature. There is no room for doubt that the human dominion over the earth, especially in the last three decades, has not exactly taken the form of preservation of nature. There is a need for a new relationship between humanity and nature. To stress the particular features of this new thinking and to appeal for new action, the WCC in 1974 for the first time used the word *sustainability*.[6] Dickinson writes in his book:

> Sustainability is linked to justice, for justice vis-à-vis the entire creation, and the entire human community as part of creation, must take into account the legitimate and often unprotected claims of future generations upon the resources of the earth.[7]

The concept of justice includes new possibilities for life, especially for those who are suffering. The same is relevant for nature: in the future we must also give new chances to nature. Not only must the discussion on the verbs used in the book of Genesis — to have *dominion*, to *replenish* and to *subdue* — go on, but we must act according to these verbs.

The search for justice as a central theme in ecumenical social ethics has two sides. It helps us to discover human problems and it helps us to find new ways for changing human situations. The ecumenical movement in itself has proved to be an excellent vehicle to discover human problems, as well as an excellent workshop for finding new ways, especially by cooperation between theologians and lay people, experts in particular fields. Their common ground is: the future is for God, therefore human beings should concern themselves and take responsibility for that future. To say it with the words of St Paul: "I pray that your love will keep growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, so that you will be able to choose what is the best" (Phil. 1:9-10). This attitude is contrary to resignation and doomsday thinking, so popular in our day, even in the churches.

Ecumenical social ethics is always related to the challenging concept of the kingdom. Here, the main question is not: when and how does the kingdom come? but rather are we prepared to get going by the power of the coming kingdom? Let us remember St Paul's warning: "Do not sadden God's Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30). Is not the ecumenical social ethics discussion always dealing with the question of theological anthropology?

Major concerns

From a bird's eye view I shall indicate some problems for new ethical thinking in the three fields I already mentioned. First, the poverty problem. For almost thirty years we have been dealing with this problem, both in the ecumenical movement and in political life. To banish poverty is one of the over-ruling ambi-

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[6]*Faith, Science and the Future: Preparatory Readings for the 1979 Conference of the World Council of Churches,* Geneva, WCC, 1978, pp.3-4. Paul Abrecht, "Sustainability — a New Dimension in Ecumenical Social Thought", in *Christians and the Future of Social Democracy*, Ormskirk and Northridge, 1982.
[7]*Op. cit.*, p.135.

tions of economists. The economic systems in the West and in the East have made progress, and especially in the western countries a feeling of triumphalism arose in the belief that poverty could be banished altogether. New studies of the European Community, however, showing that at least thirty million people can be characterized as poor, dampen these feelings of triumphalism and make us considerably more modest. Pockets of poverty — also in our continent — are persistent, and research shows that a great many projects to combat this poverty are both costly and must continue indefinitely.

Contrary to our countries, the poverty in the third world countries has dimensions of absoluteness. The lives of people are threatened immediately, day after day. From the point of view of the total number of poor people — 800 million and probably 1,000 million within twenty years — the world, and the national economic systems for these countries appear to be complete failures. Christians must firmly oppose Dr Kissinger's famous and often quoted words: "The present economic system has served the world well." For the poor this system has proven to be a catastrophe.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow again, 40,000 children die daily from starvation and exhaustion. By itself this is a staggering fact, but what is more staggering is the other fact: the majority of people living in the northern hemisphere do not react at all to this apocalyptic predicament. Just like forty years ago, we still do not see the catastrophe on our doorsteps. There is abundant literature showing us the dimensions of this human condition. Of course there is always need in the 1980s for new research in this area, but even without further study, every politician and every citizen of these countries can know what has to be done. What jumps to the eye is the vast political unwillingness and incapacity to act with determination.

Can we have confidence that the powerful finally (after the death of how many?) will act to fight the poverty problem? It is naive and too optimistic to think that those who are in power finally will share their power with others. Again and again we should remind ourselves: "There can be no justice in our world without a transfer of economic resources to undergird the redistribution of political power and to make cultural self-determination meaningful."[8]

This observation points out why the resistance in the rich nations is vital. The redistribution or the de-development has to be paid for. Churches and Christians in these rich nations should be aware that their position will be severely challenged at home the very moment they start programmes for this redistribution, and even more so when they persevere in such programmes. Ecumenical social ethics should give priority to the most serious problem the world faces: poverty in the materialistic sense of the word. First things first: the bread of my brother. Too many people in our western societies still think that this grave problem can be solved by market forces. Even if one attaches some economic and political importance to the market as an effective mechanism for regulation of preferences and efficiency, there is plenty of room to doubt that the market mechanism produces the maximum possible value of goods, distributes them in accordance with demand and affords freedom to the individual, let alone to all individuals. The

[8]*Minutes*, WCC Central Committee, Canterbury 1969.

collective planning systems do not help us either with their metaphysics of the collective ownership of the means of production.

One of the dangers in the ecumenical social ethics debate is that we repeat ourselves too often, especially in the development discussion. In this respect we mirror the secular debate. The second Brandt report is more or less a repetition of the first. There is no real progress, and the agenda of UNCTAD VI is almost identical with the agenda of UNCTAD I. All of this is very discouraging; yet it is of no use to be overcome with pessimism, because pessimism never brings us closer to the solution. We shall have to build a spirituality for combat as mandatory for Christians and their churches.

The ecological problem is the second issue for which I will ask attention. The two sides of this problem, the depletion of resources and the environmental deterioration, are literally the price nature pays for our increased levels of production and consumption. Here again the old economic paradigms are obsolete and inadequate. They do not take into account ecological and resource limits and the physical sustainability of the economy. Stewardship is not in safe hands with those who are possessed by the unqualified concept of growth. The Club of Rome's report opened the eyes of many people, but one cannot say that its lessons have been taken to heart. On the contrary, the situation has become worse.

One has to make a distinction between those who are fighting against world poverty, and those who are only looking for economic growth as such. The former are in a desperate situation. Giving priority to combat hunger demands extension of food production, but this extension causes pollution because of the excessive use of fertilizers. Is it inevitable that the poor have to destroy their soil and environment, only to survive? This urgent environmental problem is rooted in one cause: poverty. Deteriorating living conditions and a polluted environment are the costs of the achievements of development programmes. Research about the effects of the so-called high-yielding varieties of food grains show a rapid decline of soil nutrients. The latter group — with little interest for the ecological effects in the efforts for more production and consumption — bears even greater responsibilities. The per capita use of raw materials in the industrialized countries already exceeds many times that in the developing countries. Future generations will be threatened by the depletion and rapid rising costs of raw materials. Short-term thinking — now apparent in relation to oil — prevails. Only a few economists accept the deterioration of the environment as an economic problem. Fresh air, fertile soil, sufficient silence and clean water are indispensable for human life. The economic growth of the past decades made these goods more scarce and vulnerable for us, but especially for future generations. Growth of production gives less satisfaction and prosperity than we once thought in periods of poverty and lack of material goods. On the contrary, sometimes one can say that a decreasing production could have a positive effect. The subject of economics deals with the reduction of scarcity, and it is becoming dubious to speak of economic *growth* when there are more industrial goods but at the same time less and less environmental goods. In other words, it is not self-evident that economic growth has to be accepted as an instrument, let alone as an aim or goal.

The third and last item I will mention is the problem of unemployment and work in almost all countries, whether industrialized or developing. Unemployment has been persistent for decades in the poor countries. Primarily it results in lack of purchasing power. The sudden rise of unemployment in the western countries is a shock for millions of people, because paid work in the present cultural system has become a measuring rod for the meaning of life itself. To be without a job may not be the same as to be without work, but without a job the majority of the unemployed feel no longer part of society. They have been marginalized. The questions posed by unemployment are rendered all the more complex due to an accumulation of two phenomena: the cyclical and structural dimensions of unemployment. On the whole in the European countries the political option is made for full employment. The ethical background of this option is that only if we have a paid job do we become human beings. On the basis of this assumption it becomes a necessity for each individual to have remunerated employment. Christians should support this option; in other words they should join the political and economic fight for employment. Nevertheless one can ask: is this a truly Christian point of view? What do we have to say about non-remunerated employment, even if we realize that (unfortunately) this is not the right time to start the discussion? We should have done it much earlier.

The structural dimension indicates that the manner in which production is organized is called into question. What type of work do people need? What type of work does the world need? Eight hundred million people in the poor regions of the world are living on the verge of death. Especially for them, senseless production borders on blasphemy. This part of the debate needs to be opened up at the transnational level. It should be deplored that the structures of the transnational corporations seem to be blind to this discussion. These institutions continue production (once started in the western countries) in the third world countries: same articles, same technology. There is a need for re-evaluation of the place and function of work in the life of the individual and of society. This re-evaluation should include the role of technology. If the technological development continues as it did in the last decades, there will be further increases in unemployment. Should we simply accept this type of development as it is, or are we prepared to enter into some discussion about it?

This is all the more urgent, because as unemployment is increasing, the quality of work is decreasing. We are witnessing the birth of the two nations status: those with good and those with bad work. This is a challenge to the concept of justice itself. Also, for this part of the problem the technology debate is decisive. We remember Dr Schumacher's vision: "Virtually all real production has turned into an inhumane chore which does not enrich a man but empties him.... We may say, therefore, that modern technology has deprived man of the kind of work that he enjoys most, creative, useful work, with hands and brains, and given him plenty of work of a fragmented kind, most of which he does not enjoy at all."[9]

High production ratios mean limited co-determination, dependency, deadly monotony and repetitiveness. For too many people this kind of production

[9]*Small is Beautiful*, London, Sphere Books, 1973, p.140.

results in a sense of emptiness and powerlessness, in apathy and suffering instead of satisfaction and enjoyment. Even more important is that this kind of work challenges the uniqueness of human beings — part of Christian anthropology — and so becomes nothing more than a falsehood. A discussion on work (and especially the ethos of work), technology, production and income in fact means a discussion on the basic elements of future societies. New choices have to be made. The final perspective of these choices is a life within limits. Is a solution at hand if the majority of the western nations also agree that there should not only be a life within limits, but also justice within limits?

Further elements for a new study of ecumenical social ethics

Developments in the ecumenical movement and particular in the World Council of Churches itself point to a new study. The last comprehensive Christian social ethics appeared at the time of the world conference on church and society (Geneva, 1966). This volume[10] had a considerable influence on ethical thinking throughout the world. The volume contains separate chapters by a great variety of authors and the final chapter of the editor is a relatively small one. Since 1966 the world has changed in many respects. The churches themselves have to do their utmost to be clear about their relations and responsibilities to society.

Although there will be no full agreement on all points, I think that a group of theologians, scientists and social scientists should start an integrated study of the social thinking within the different church families and the institutions related to them, to discover what can be formulated as a common vision and where different thinking is valid and necessary.

At least four developments started in the seventies point to the new study proposed. First is the proposal of the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development for a study on the church in solidarity with the poor. The proposals for action, based on Julio de Santa Ana's outline, not only have ecclesiological consequences, but also provide a whole set of assumptions for the struggle towards a just, participatory and sustainable society. One of the most interesting features of this CCPD study is the proposal to move one step further in the next decade towards enactment of the churches' pretension to become a worldwide community. This demands that Christians have an open eye to give solidarity with Christians in other countries priority over solidarity with compatriots refusing the fight against poverty — there are situations in which the loyalty of Christians may not go to their own nations.

When people suffer from hunger and misery, other people are responsible for it in almost every case. They may be members of our own national church. This struggle in the process of liberation from hunger and misery must be accepted and understood as necessary. When poor and oppressed people stand up for liberation against the powerful who oppress them, solidarity from the side of the oppressor can humanize and empower them. This is only one example that points to the need for a new ethical reflection, in which the unfinished discussion of violence could be incorporated.

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[10]*Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*, John C. Bennett, ed., London, SCM Press, 1966.

The second development of importance for the study is the challenge for the churches coming from the feminist movement. The Sheffield report says:

> Social structures and psychological attitudes are linked in a demonic web of oppression that is sexist, racist and classist... Evil cannot be explained only by reference to cultural and economic factors or to social and political structures though each of these plays an important role.[11]

I personally cannot fully grasp the consequences of such a new study of ecumenical social ethics if we accept these viewpoints. However, there will be long and deep discussions on these points.

The third new development in the ecumenical movement is to be found in the Faith and Order Commission. I will draw attention to two parts of the Lima Conference (1982). These discussions, already started in previous meetings, came to surprising conclusions in Lima. First I mention the study "Towards the Common Explication of the Apostolic Faith in the Contemporary Situations of the Churches". Characteristic for nearly all the churches in the world is the struggle for a new relation between faith and politics. In Europe this discussion started in the fight against the Nazi terror and the debate has been going on since 1934 — the year the Confession of Barmen was published. Once the decision has been taken for a contemporary explication of the Nicene Creed (1982), an Ecumenical Creed has to include our confession about the life of our age and the life of the age to come. The Lima report states:

> How can we explain to twentieth century neighbours an understanding of life which transcends death, yet can be lived now? How can we explicate a Christian hope, rooted and grounded in eternal life with God, which addresses urgent human problems, which illumines human suffering and persecution, which clarifies and judges human utopias in the light of God's coming kingdom?[12]

How can the churches confess a Christian hope without a careful study of social ethics? The same is relevant for the other conclusion of the Lima conference, dealing with the study on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community". The constituency of the Sub-unit on Church and Society cannot but fully agree with the statement that the unity of the divided church and the renewal of the broken human community are closely inter-related. I have taken notice of John Deschner's words:

> We are not talking about a new basic concern, but about "a broader horizon" within which this church unity concern remains our first and constitutive vocation. With that emphasis presupposed, we have a bi-polar theme: the unity of the church *and* the renewal of human community.[13]

I found it very interesting and hopeful that the Lima conference "recommends that Faith and Order consider undertaking a study of anthropology".[14] The anthropological approach has been recommended already in the 1966 conference. That report says:

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[11]*The Community of Women and Men in the Church*, Constance F. Parvey, ed., Geneva, WCC, 1983.
[12]*Towards Visible Unity: Commision on Faith and Order, Lima 1982*, WCC, Geneva, 1982. Vol. II: Study Papers and Reports, p.39.
[13]*Ibid.*, p.185.
[14]*Ibid.*, p.220.

> In stressing the criterion of the human, we are aware that there is not full theological agreement on the meaning of our humanity in Christ and the World Council of Churches could usefully invite a group of theologians and social scientists to pursue this question.[15]

The fourth and last item I shall refer to is, of course, our own field of study in Church and Society. Immediately after the MIT conference on "Faith Science and the Future", the working committee on Church and Society prepared a new programme for the 1980s. This programme included a paragraph on theology and ethics, and the three recommendations can be integrated in my proposal. The wordings of these recommendations are:

— That Church and Society organize, in cooperation with Faith and Order and other appropriate sub-units, a study seminar of theologians, with natural and social scientists and historians and philosophers of science.
— That Church and Society organize, in cooperation with the Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies, a consultation in Asia of religious thinkers, philosophers and historians of science as well as social and natural scientists, from the great religions, to pursue further the dialogue begun at the conference at MIT on the vision of reality and the approach of science/technology in different traditions.
— We have become deeply aware in our work on science and technology... of the need for a thorough study of the theological basis of Christian social ethics and technology today. We recommend that the study include theologians, natural scientists, social scientists and possible victims of atomic explosions, industrial pollution and accidents, and improperly tested pharmaceutical drugs.

Proposal

Social thinking in the ecumenical movement is problem-oriented. We define and discover the problems the moment when men and women suffer from the injustices of political, technological and economic systems. In our common ecumenical view that biblical faith is not a metaphysical system, but a response to God's initiating action, expressing love and requiring justice in the midst of God's creation, there is a need for a bold new initiative by those who are responsible in the ecumenical movement. There is a need for an interdisciplinary approach to start a worldwide study, supported by regional groups of the same composition to outline a new ecumenical social ethic.

The first step could be to set up an international group of scientists, theologians and social scientists with a mandate to produce a preliminary outline for a five-year study. After that step regional groups can bring in all the colours characteristic for local situations. The Lima report says: "The basic study resources will have to come from a number of groups to be formed in different world contexts" and: "The study will continue to be rooted in concrete *situations of engagement*".[16]

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[15]*Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time*, Geneva, WCC, 1967, p.90.
[16]*Op.cit.*, pp.139 and 230.

What can be formulated as a common view should be formulated in that way. Are there specific views related to church families and theological traditions, or are there mainly specific views related to regional situations? All this should be investigated. Of course, this is not easy. On the contrary, only people with great wisdom and experience should be included, but the leaders of the ecumenical movement should invite them with a sense of urgency to give priority to cooperate in this international responsibility. This study can play an important role in the clarification of the position of the churches. In the last resort it is a way of giving account for our hope that Christians are willing to invite the future in an open and constructive way.

Our Debate Continues: a Letter to Paul Abrecht

Max Kohnstamm

Dear Paul,

It is a privilege to be asked to contribute to this *Festschrift* in your honour. However, rather than do so in the form of an article about you or your multifaceted contribution to thinking on church and society, I would like to do it in the form of a letter, continuing our nearly forty-year long discussions.

Concerns growing out of the experiences of the 30s and 40s brought us together for the first time. You were deeply interested in the shape and form that European reconstruction would take; my first post-war contacts with Germany had been church contacts, and from 1948 on my work in the Dutch Foreign Office was concerned with Germany and the role it was to play in the future of Europe. The Schuman Plan, launched in May 1950, seemed to open new and realistic vistas of a European order, going beyond the balance of power concept that had so dismally failed to prevent the outbreak of World War I, or the approach embodied in the Treaty of Versailles which, through its attempts to establish domination, contributed to the realization of the dangers against which Keynes had warned the world already in 1919 in his *The Economic Consequences of the Peace.* In 1950 it seemed that, finally, a way had been shown out of the vicious circle of hatred, war and the various attempts of European nations to establish domination over the others.

Were Reinhold Niebuhr's thoughts about the world community[1] finding a first application between six nations of Europe, nations that had been at each other's throats for nearly half a century? Was it conceivable to make some small steps towards what Tillich described a few years later as "the unity of power, justice and love in group relations"?[2] Coming out of the long, dark tunnel of the 1930s and the following war years, deeply concerned about the cold war, Europe's division and its economic weakness, we thought that perhaps here might be the glow of light, of a new and different day. If we were right to think so, then these were developments the churches should be aware of, watch, accompany, assist if possible, and criticize if necessary.

Since those who thought this way found little or no resonance in the established churches, a group of men, all of them engaged in some form or other of

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[1]Chapter V of *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness.* (I wish that this wise and impressive book would be re-edited and widely read by those who are fascinated by the interrelationship between church and society!)

[2]*Love, Power and Justice*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, Chapter VI.

public life and anxious to discuss together the relations they tried to discover between their work and the biblical message, began to meet more or less regularly. You acted as secretary to this group, but you were much more than that: you were its convener and inspirer. Our small group was remarkably heterogeneous — men like André Philip and Kenneth Grubb were magnificent examples of the differences between the nations they came from. I well remember Grubb saying, after an exposition by Philip of the plans to establish a European defence community: "If one is so enthusiastic about something, it must be a very bad idea."

European integration, the division of Germany and of Europe, the problems of German rearmament, were the subjects we discussed together, searching for agreement or, if this could not be established, at least for understanding each other's points of view. When during the late fifties and early sixties the European Communities took their form, our group began to meet less regularly. More official forms of church involvement in what happened in Brussels began to be organized, making our totally unofficial work dispensable.

In the meantime you had begun the long and arduous preparations for the 1966 world conference on church and society. I am still deeply grateful to you for having made me a participant in that great event. The four preparatory volumes, together with the official report on that conference, will remain for a long time a monument to the World Council of Churches and to yourself.

The fact that at that conference the wide gap existing between what Charles West later called the "technologists" and the "revolutionaries" became very clear, does not detract but on the contrary adds to the importance of this event. It is a gap that has not been bridged, probably cannot and possibly should not be bridged, even though, as a confirmed "technologist", I cannot but hope that it may be narrowed — in our direction, of course! It was as a result of involvement in that conference that Eugene Blake asked me, with Joseph Gremillion, to co-chair what became Sodepax.

For years we met regularly in that effort that started with great, in retrospect probably not very well founded, hopes. These hopes were twofold, the central one being to find a broad common basis on which all the churches — of the developed and the developing nations — could deal with the immense challenge of development, of rapid social change, of bridging the gap between rich and poor nations. In my memory, the high point of hope was the first large Sodepax conference, in Beirut. What a strange and tragic irony that this then so beautiful city now lies in ruins, torn apart and destroyed by terrible centrifugal tendencies, the force of which in those years of high hope we so much underestimated! At that conference "technologists" and "revolutionaries" seemed to come close to a common view — or did the first overwhelm the second?

Since then, I think, most of us have learned the hard way how much more complicated bridging the economic gap and development is, how difficult it is to organize, on a long-term basis, any transfer of real resources and how much more is involved in development than just transfers. Is it the disarray in development thinking, comparable only to the ever more total disarray among general economists, that has placed Sodepax music under such a heavy "sourdine"? Or

is it as the "revolutionaries" would think the evil egotism of the developed nations, and of the oppressors linked to those nations within the developing countries themselves?

Our second high hope, less openly talked about, but at least in my case strongly felt, concerned the rapprochement between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council. We felt ourselves a small band of quartermasters, preparing possibly for membership of the Roman Catholic Church in the World Council. Were these hopes as unrealistic as, with hindsight, they now seem to have been? If not, what unforeseen tendencies and developments on one or on both sides made them come to naught?

A change of jobs on my part took me away from Sodepax and the World Council. I followed your work in the field of technology and ethics only from afar. Now retirement has come, first for me, then for you. Faithful to your friends as always, you came to see me in Brussels, then sent me the report *Before It's Too Late*.[3] Our interrupted discussion started again, with a small nuclear blast against that report from my side and a reply from you, so characteristic for the openness, fairness and kindness with which you defend your position, or rather answer it by asking probing questions and encouraging the others to think further and more profoundly about their own position.

While writing this "retrospect" about what our friendship during these nearly forty years has meant to me, I am above all looking forward to the continuation of our discussions. What are the worries and misgivings I would like to discuss with you, in order to reflect on your replies?

Before trying to mention them briefly, let me state that I have become more than ever a convinced "technologist" (although, of course, I do not accept all of the implications connected with that term!). And in theological matters, a much delayed God-after-Auschwitz effect has been the cause of my drifting far away from much of the faith that had been both dear and meaningful to me. I am saying this because I think that the respondent has a right to know from what perspective questions are being asked.

The first matter that I hope to discuss with you is my growing reservation about church positions and opinions concerning political questions. Not of course because I underestimate their importance. War and peace, development and the forms it should take, are matters of life and death. Neither, of course, because I deny the link between biblical thought and message, and positions we take in their light concerning the burning political issues of our times. However, I have become more and more preoccupied by what seems to me a growing tendency to overlook the fact — maybe a tragic fact — that men and women trying honestly to base their actions and convictions on what they learn from biblical thinking may come to very different, sometimes even radically opposing, conclusions.

Looking back over history, I am perplexed to see that the official churches nearly unfailingly have been on the wrong side of the road. Crusades, the burning of heretics, incredible inhumanity in the treatment of minorities, opposition

[3]Report of a public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament organized by the WCC in November 1981, Geneva, WCC, 1983.

to what we now see as social justice during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the blessing of weapons during World War I — should they not make us very careful indeed in expressing other than personal opinions, above all in condemning those who take positions different from ours? Who, in this year of Luther's anniversary, would dare to defend political opinions, expressed with such absolute certainty? Explain them by placing them in the context of the times, yes, but defend them? There are of course totally unacceptable ends, leaving us only the possibility to say: no — whatever the consequences. But in the overwhelming number of cases, there is no difference of opinion about ends, but great differences about the means to achieve those ends. Even Cromwell, not an example of tolerance, said: "By Christ, remember that you may be mistaken!"

In 1916 during World War I, just before launching the attack of the Somme, General Haig wrote to his wife: "I feel that every step in my plan has been taken with divine help." You know my worry: are the churches, is the World Council, going back to the dangerous, not to say blasphemous, simplicity that seems to me to be implied in such a sentence? Increasingly since some of the discussions in Sodepax, I am inclined to think that it is the most important task of the churches and of the World Council to be *Pontifex Maximus* — to build bridges, to try to understand the other's point of view, to keep the dialogue going between those who hold radically different views. I am deeply impressed by Levinas's saying: Not *Cogito ergo sum*, but: *Respondeo ergo sum.* Replying is something very different from decrying. And, Auschwitz notwithstanding, it is indeed extremely terrifying but also extremely rare that we are confronted with people who want to pursue Evil. Crying "wolf" when the wolf is not there does not help to keep him at bay when he really comes. Neither the avoidance of war, nor development, nor social justice can be obtained through short-cuts. They will need a continuous effort of empathy in an attempt to understand the other's willingness to cross bridges and borders.

My second concern relates to the problem of nuclear arms, of arms in general — the problem of the avoidance of war and, beyond that, of the organization of peace. What I find nearly totally lacking in most of the present church and church-related statements is a serious attempt to analyze causes, instead of discussing and condemning symptoms. What worries me is not that this makes these statements intellectually unrespectable, but that it makes them ineffective. They remind me of Xerxes whipping the waves of the Bosphorus. It seems to me that only from an understanding of the cause of war can be found the means to prevent it, and to overcome the state of pure armistice, of no war, in which we are living. Do not the churches have a special contribution to make to the discernment of that cause? I wish that every discussion about arms and the prevention of war would take as its point of departure André Neher's chapter "La concurrence existentielle" from *Les puits de l'exil*,[4] and Paul Tillich's lectures about the relations between love, power and justice.

The last concern I would like to discuss with you is the relation between intentions and the result of their realization. To what extent are we responsible for the latter? Often they are very far removed from what our intentions wanted to

[4]Paris, Editions Albin Michel, 1966.

achieve. Even a "technologist" like me is frightened by the idea of being responsible for the results of actions based on his intentions. During most of my life I thought that the phrase "the way to hell is paved with good intentions" implied the thought: because these good intentions are not carried out. Now, I wonder whether the implication is not: just because they are carried out. Horrible thought! And yet, should we not worry much more than we mostly do about results? Is there not, especially among us, an undue emphasis on intent, linked perhaps to an age-long preoccupation with souls and their salvation, a neglect of concern — a most worrying concern indeed — about results?

As you see, Paul, I am very much in need of continuing our discussions. Over these nearly forty years, they have immensely enriched me, even if they have not saved me from becoming a heretic and an ever more convinced "technologist".

Yours ever,

Max Kohnstamm

Critics from Without and from Within

Ronald Preston

Since this chapter is to be about critics of Church and Society, two preliminary remarks are essential. The first is that I have a great admiration for the work of Paul Abrecht. As a serious and ongoing study in practical Christian social ethics, his work is without equal in the World Council of Churches: nothing so comprehensive or complete has been achieved elsewhere. Moreover, it has been accomplished with the minimum of staff and budget resources. Indeed, financial support has been specially raised on several occasions, thus relieving the general budget of the WCC. Paul Abrecht has shown astonishing vitality in maintaining the impetus over the years, and especially in enlisting the cooperation of distinguished collaborators. A number of these had never before been asked for their help by any Christian body, and were often more than ready to assist when asked. It should also be added that anyone who has responsibilities for wide-ranging global commitments of considerable perplexity, involving frequent absences from his base of operations, depends upon an office efficiently and intelligently administered. In this respect Paul has been fortunate over the years, as he has often made clear, in having Christa Stalschus as his secretary.

The second preliminary remark is that criticisms of Church and Society have less and less been confined to it, and more and more directed to the whole social witness and method of the WCC. This is because an expansion of the number of social issues on the agenda has been parallel with the expansion of the WCC itself. Among these issues black theology, feminist theology, the ethical problems of revolutionary action and nation-building in post-colonial political situations, and the uncertain results of scientific and technological development come at once to mind. There has been a diversification of operations within the WCC, and other units have taken over areas which were at one time, or in theory might well have been, the province of Church and Society. For instance economic issues, which at one time figured largely on its agenda, have tended to move elsewhere in recent years. It is not therefore possible strictly to separate criticisms of Church and Society from more general criticisms of the WCC.

Paul Abrecht inherited a method of study which owed much to J.H. Oldham in the formative stages of the ecumenical movement.[1] This process produced some very solid work. The most obvious example is the six volumes issued in connection with the Oxford conference on "Church, Community and State" in

[1]See the chapter by W.A. Visser 't Hooft in this volume, "Oldham's Method in Abrecht's Hands".

1937.[2] It is doubtful whether a weightier theological contribution has been made since. In running a special one-year course on ecumenical social ethics in Manchester University in the 1970s, I frequently found that students became excited when introduced to the Oxford conference volumes, and found them still relevant today. Paul Abrecht continued this method, and recently he has brought in a number of highly distinguished natural scientists in connection with the wider and narrower issues raised by nuclear energy and ecology.

The West and the "two-thirds world"

In 1937, and in 1948 when the WCC was finally launched, the context was largely "western". It is just the enlargement of the WCC since then which has produced criticism from "western" sources. It is hard for the "West", the heart of the old Christendom, to find that its viewpoint and priorities are not shared by the "two-thirds world". It often leads to bad-tempered criticism. Some of it is based on sheer ignorance of the WCC in general and Church and Society in particular. Some of it is wilful ignorance, exemplified by a recent attack in *Reader's Digest* (USA) which is not worth attention in this chapter. Some of it is based on the old heresy that the church should stick to "religious" questions and eschew political ones. It is ironic that this is precisely the attitude taken to the church by the authorities in communist countries, whereas those who take it in the "West" are usually strongly anti-communist. I do not need to expose the fallacy of such an attitude in this essay, though I shall shortly mention two critics, E.R. Norman and Ernest Lefever, who partly exemplify it. Meanwhile how can one explain the disgruntlement expressed in the following passage, except as due to nostalgia for the vanished predominance of the "West"?

> Naturally, the WCC bureaucrats are highly unrepresentative both in their style and their politics: and their ecumenist assumptions are thoroughly out of tune with the deep-rooted attachments to particular forms and localities found amongst most ordinary Christians. The interests of such bureaucrats lie in canvassing support in the third world, in problems of racism and the like, and their whole theology and vocabulary has decreasing contact with the home constituency. At one and the same time they bureaucratize and standardize and manage to wield an existentialist-cum-Marxist vocabulary of liberation, dialogue, significant encounters and the like. Feeling their own loss of roots they lean ever more heavily towards third world politics, condoning whatever is illiberal in the third world (or indeed in communist countries since they want the prestige deriving from the participation of the Orthodox), while campaigning vigorously against every blot on the social record of their own countries.

This comes from the book *A General Theory of Secularisation*[3] by David Martin, an internationally renowned professor of sociology at the London School of Economics with a special interest in the sociology of religion, and a distinguished lay theologian (who has recently been ordained). His competence in this area is much greater than that of either Norman or Lefever, which makes the whole tone of the passage so sad.

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[2]*The Christian Understanding of Man; The Kingdom of God and History; The Christian Faith and the Common Life; Church and Community; Church, Community and State in Relation to Education; The Universal Church and the World of Nations*; all published with a general introduction by J.H. Oldham, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1938.
[3]Oxford, Blackwells, 1978, p.294.

Norman is a history don at Cambridge University and an Anglican priest. His large book, *Church and Society 1770-1970*,[4] which contains much valuable material, becomes increasingly idiosyncratic the nearer it gets to 1970. The only entry concerning the WCC in the index adds "unsound teachings of", and gives six references. The basis of his attitude becomes more clear in his broadcast Reith Lectures on "Christianity and the World Order",[5] in which the WCC figures quite largely. It becomes plain that Norman has two unreconciled attitudes. One is that the Christian gospel is basically concerned with the "ethereal qualities of immortality", and must not be "politicized", in the sense of equating it with a political option or a "secular" value like liberation. One can query the first part of this assertion and broadly agree with the second. However, there is also a clear approval of a time when the clergy were influential and sacralized politics from within, and the Christian knowledge of politics served the interests of the church as an institution. No wonder he does not like the extended canvas on which Paul Abrecht in Church and Society has had to work.

Norman is much quoted by Ernest Lefever in his *Amsterdam to Nairobi: the World Council of Churches and the Third World*.[6] Lefever is apparently a much better informed critic, for in the past he has had a good deal of direct contact with the WCC. The book is published by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, DC, of which Lefever is President. His formal position is better than that of Norman. The WCC "should encourage the peaceful and lawful forces that are trying to deal constructively with the problems of poverty, injustice and lack of freedom. There have been, of course, situations so rigid or dangerous that armed violence was the only possible option... Most crises are more ambiguous." [7] When he applies this perspective, however, he finds himself at odds with a great deal of WCC material. This is because his judgments reflect predominant strains in USA opinions, and do not enter at all into those of the rest of the world who are at the receiving end of the enormous power of the USA, and do not see things the same way. The WCC and Church and Society have perforce to hear from a gobal constituency.

The frequent complaint in the "West" that the WCC is too sanguine about political violence is overstated in any case, but it hardly makes sense unless it is based on pacifist principles, which it rarely is. The "western" critics are using a double standard, one which applies to their world and another which applies to the rest. Similarly, the charge that WCC stances are selective in their condemnations, and especially that they are soft on coercion in communist countries, is again overstated, and ignores the fact that one cannot proceed on a similar issue in all countries in the same way, regardless of whether the Christians are in a small minority, or of the type of government under which they live. South Africa, the USSR and Iran are very different in these respects.

Mixed with these complaints are references to the WCC "curia", "bureaucracy", "centralization" or "the social action curia". These pejorative terms are an indication more of prejudice than reasoned criticism. There is,

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[4]Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976.
[5]Given in 1978 and published by Oxford University Press in 1979.
[6]1979.
[7]*Ibid.*, p.60.

however, a grain of truth hidden in them. The permanent staff of any organization always have a good deal of influence, as those involved day by day in its activities, compared with members of committees who meet only occasionally. In the case of the WCC the influence is qualified, real and necessary, although it has to be watched. It is qualified by the need to carry the committees, and by the fact that it is not monolithic, because the staff differ among themselves. Those involved in official assemblies and committees of the WCC are nearly all nominated by the churches, but in study work and consultations and in the appointment of advisers the staff have more influence. A good deal of thought goes to balancing age, sex, nationality, type of experience and confessional tradition. But one phenomenon has been noticed. I have said that much of the criticism comes from the disgruntled "West", which no longer sets the agenda, and which sees its criteria questioned. Nevertheless there are important stances in the "western" tradition which need to be heard. There is a certain tendency to find that those from the "West" involved in global advisory consultations are persons who respond most fully to critics of their own countries, and are not sufficiently convinced of the value of their own tradition to present it, in addition to paying attention to its critics; and when they ought to call into question simplicities from others, in a truly ecumenical dialogue, they fail to do so.

Moreover, all of us are liable to be swayed by intellectual fashions. No church is exempt from this; neither is the WCC. For a long time it was dominated by what Paul Ramsey in the book mentioned below called "a truncated Barthianism", though that has now passed. Church and Society was over-influenced for a time by the Club of Rome report of 1972, *The Limits to Growth.*[8] I remember the Church and Society consultation at Cardiff that year. Half of those present were engaged on the theme of "Violence, Non-violence and the Struggle for Justice", and the other half on economic issues. I myself was so occupied in the former that I had no time to find out what was happening in the latter. However, when I got home I read the papers presented and was astonished at the economic naivety of many of them, carried away by this first report of the Club of Rome.

Theology and political policy

In my view much the most important criticism of Church and Society was made by Paul Ramsey in his book *Who Speaks for the Church?*[9] which was a direct response to the Geneva conference of 1966 on "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time". In this book he says he is particularly concerned with Christian ethics as an authentic discipline and not simply the religious consecration of strong feelings. Ramsey's complaint is that the Geneva conference rushed to too direct detailed conclusions (on an alleged Christian basis) on political and economic issues. Others have criticized Church and Society at different times, less cogently, for *not* coming to a clear decision for or against, as in the question of nuclear energy. Ramsey is at the other extreme. He makes a sharp separation between a theological statement and one by Christians

[8]New York, Universe Books.
[9]Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1967.

which comes to a specific decision about an empirical situation. He leaves the latter to "the magistrates". It is a strongly "two realms" doctrine, advanced in this case by a Methodist and not a Lutheran. The most he will grant is a statement in the form: "If a certain political conclusion is arrived at by the authorities, then a great deal of Christian opinion will support them." This is in order that, in supporting a specific decision, Christians are made to be clear on the cost of implementing it, and on precisely how one moves from the existing position to the one recommended. However, in his view "basic-decision and action-oriented principles of ethical and political analysis",[10] which give direction rather than directives, are a better position for Christians to adopt.

This raises questions which I have explored in my Scott Holland lectures, *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century.*[11] Suffice it to say here that Ramsey draws attention to real problems, whilst making too sharp a separation between "the magistrates", or political authorities, and the rest of us. He is also unduly sanguine about the procedures by which Roman Catholic statements on social ethics are made. True, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II (1965), is impressive. But Ramsey's praise of "the concern for the fullness of Christian truth that is attained by the process by which a social encyclical is issued by a pontiff"[12] was written before the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was promulgated in 1968. There are many questions which arise about the procedures which lie behind the issue of social teaching by the Roman Catholic *magisterium*, and this I have also discussed in the Scott Holland lectures.

To some extent Ramsey was answered on method in Christian social ethics by the joint consultation of Church and Society and Faith and Order at Zagorsk in 1968.[13] It said clearly that: "Theology cannot remove the ambiguity of political ethics in a revolutionary situation", as against the tendency to moralize in the sense of expecting a clear "yes" or "no" as a guide to political action. But other issues remain, and this is the last time that method in Christian social ethics has been explicitly considered by Church and Society. It is due for further attention.

Ramsey has a further criticism that the theory whereby a Church and Society study conference speaks *to* the churches, not *for* them, is "a situation which invites irresponsible utterances".[14] Here he is being perverse. It is precisely the right stance. If the WCC does not keep ahead of the churches, it is no use to them. Merely to be a post-bag circulating their existing opinions is otiose. They can do that for themselves. Irritating as it is for them, the WCC must push ahead and speak *to* the churches or give its study conferences freedom to do so, presenting the churches with the best work it can do, and leaving them to evaluate it.

Ramsey's criticism was more directed at the tendency of a study conference, like Geneva, to pass resolutions addressed to governments on matters of immediate action, which was not its job, and were not and could not be adequately considered. This brings to mind the warning of J.H. Oldham against Christians feeling pleased with themselves after passing a resolution without considering

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[10]*Ibid.*, p.13.
[11]London, SCM Press, 1983.
[12]*Op. cit.*, p.146.
[13]*Study Encounter*, No. 2, 1968.
[14]*Op. cit.*, p.32.

whether they themselves were committed to any action by it. In Church and Society consultations a particular weakness in this respect is the shortage of people from the echelons of government, and indeed from management or trade unions in industry. It is partly because in politics they cannot get away or are subject to instant re-call if a critical political vote or crisis arises. This is less true of industry. But neither top level nor middle management has played much part in Church and Society activities, and trade unionists have been almost entirely absent. These are more difficult for church bodies to bring in than are professional and managerial folk, because they are more suspicious, in view of the lack of relation of the church to the labour movement since the Industrial Revolution. However, their absence is a clear defect.

This is connected with a criticism one sometimes hears within the WCC that the whole Church and Society method is too elitist. It pays attention to the professional persons, the expert, the established people in society, and not to the poor. It operates at a rarefied centre and not at the grassroots. It is *de haut en bas* and not participatory. This is surely a false polarization. It is not that one should be done and the other left undone; both are needed. But there must be some division of labour, though each needs to be alert to what others are doing. In such a self-conscious body as the WCC this is not difficult. The poor and unprivileged need to be heard themselves, and not interpreted by better-off intermediaries. Nevertheless, they do not see the whole. It is impossible to deal with issues of nuclear energy without physicists, or genetic engineering without biologists and medical folk, or unemployment and underdevelopment without economists. None of them have the last word, but they do have a necessary word. Without their contribution good intentions can lead to foolish actions. In mobilizing them Church and Society has done the ecumenical movement an essential service.

Beyond Deterrence: Elements of a New Ecumenical Conceptualization of Peace Politics

Friedhelm Solms

Since the beginning of the Constantinian era, which for the first time in history involved Christians in political responsibility and has continued to regulate church-state relationships, Christianity has been concerned to find a political concept which can dispense with military power and its use. Christians have wrestled in a variety of ways to arrive at an ethically based Christian position on the legitimacy of the use of violence by the state, and that can be traced historically in the development of the "doctrine of the just war". This still guides the thinking of many churches even today, despite the fact that its foundations are not so much the witness of the Bible as Greek political philosophy and Roman legal tradition.

It has had lasting consequences and has shown itself tenacious even in the face of the many new problems arising with the advent of the nuclear age. At least, so it appeared at first. The doctrine of the just war aims to prevent war by accepting the use of weapons as ethically tolerable only as a last resort after all political means to resolve conflict have been exhausted. The basic idea of the theory of nuclear deterrence was at least conceptually compatible with that aim: nuclear weapons are held in readiness for the sole purpose of making war a permanent impossibility by the threat that they will be used.

However, the conditions under which the doctrine of the just war and the theory of nuclear deterrence could be understood and justified in ethical terms as functional equivalents mostly no longer obtain. I shall say more about the reasons for this later. It is worth noting, however, that, after decades of indecision and uncertainty concerning the morality of nuclear deterrence, an ecumenical consensus is now emerging that the spirit and logic of deterrence should be repudiated on principle. This emerging consensus includes the majority of the member churches of the WCC and also large sectors of the Roman Catholic Church. To put it in a rather simplified way, this general judgment rests on the (as I shall later show) well-founded suspicion that nuclear deterrence in its present form is hardly able to prevent war and indeed is beginning to make it more likely.

Nevertheless, we should not be euphoric at the growing ecumenical consensus on a new ecumenical peace ethic. Mere renunciation of the spirit and logic of

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• This text has been translated from the German by the WCC Language Service.

deterrence in itself does not do away with one single nuclear weapon. Conversely, the spirit and logic of deterrence can persist even though its implementation in the form of nuclear weapons be temporarily halted or permanently abandoned. Neither of these two is utterly utopian, as recent developments have shown. It may, therefore, be useful to review the steps by which we have arrived at this basic ecumenical consensus so that we may consider the elements out of which a Christian peace ethic beyond deterrence might be built, and be able to assess its political practicability.

The problems in deterrence

I shall first make a few observations on what seems to me to be the central problem in any discussion on nuclear deterrence: its intrinsic inconsistency. For forty years now our thinking on war and peace has been shaped by deterrence. The idea of deterrence, which has been elevated to a doctrine, builds on the shock caused by Hiroshima: the threatened use of nuclear weapons is meant to dissuade an opponent from using military methods to pursue political aims. The credibility of the threat depends on the technical capability and determination actually to use the weapons being held in readiness for that purpose.

Since nuclear stalemate at strategic level was reached between the superpowers in the East-West conflict, deterrence has been mutual. The threat by one side to inflict intolerable damage on the other, when the other is capable of threatening the same in return, is tantamount to a threat against itself. The threat in deterrence thus includes the threat of suicide, the end of civilization as we know it, and possibly the annihilation of the whole of the created world.

Deterrence as a threat against the other side and against oneself is a political and psychological phenomenon, for it combines two contradictory motivating factors: the fear of annihilation and a rational response induced by it. The concept of deterrence assumes that fear will lead the other side to rational political behaviour. We know, however, that the opposite is the case. All experience shows that individuals and groups required to reach decisions under pressure in such crisis situations are no longer in full command of their capacity to perceive and act. They tend to regress to patterns of behaviour from earlier stages and react in anything but a rational way. Since deterrence operates between groups of political and military leaders, those people would need to be endowed with almost superhuman powers if they were to be able to take in all available information and then react rationally even under conditions of extreme pressure.

At the same time, deterrence rests on technical prerequisites. Since these prerequisites are, however, constantly subject to change through technical innovation, the system of nuclear deterrence is always stable only in the short term. An essential technical prerequisite for the supposed stability of the system of mutual deterrence is second-strike capability, i.e. the ability to deliver a counterstrike after suffering nuclear attack. This stability is, of course, endangered in East and West by fears that either one of the super-powers could achieve the technical capability to deliver a comprehensive pre-emptive strike which would disable all the other's weapons. Both elements in the concept of deterrence —

credible threat on the one hand and the technical capability to carry out the threat on the other — thus give further impetus to an already accelerating arms race. The threat of deterrence thus produces uncertainty and fear. The continual signalling of mutual threat does not, however, remove this fear syndrome, indeed, it makes it more acute, for those making the threat are themselves always also under threat. Thus, weapons technology meant to increase stability perpetually gives rise to further instability. The means used cancel out their own effects, with disastrous results. The strategic system governing the East-West conflict, which is based on deterrence, is dominated by a dynamic which runs counter to the goal of stability. This contradiction is the fatal flaw in the concept of deterrence: the system of threat and counter-threat inevitably produces an irrational defensive reaction based on fear, which results in a further escalation of the arms race.

This intrinsic inconsistency in the theory of deterrence itself is one side of the problem. The other is that, in translating the theory of deterrence into military strategies, both sides failed to preserve nuclear weapons as an exclusively political means of threat. Even weapons to be used simply as a threat are still weapons. The development of smaller tactical nuclear weapons, limited in their effects, and their inclusion in the planning of military strategy for the conduct of war threatens to rob these weapons of their deterrent effect, and hence of their presumed capability of preventing war. Moreover, any military strategy whose political aim is the prevention of war has to prove its viability in a crisis. At such a time, the fundamental inconsistency in the strategy of deterrence, which aims at de-escalation by threatening escalation, has a negative effect in that the expectation of a pre-emptive or counter-strike by the other side places leaders under pressure to act, which leads them to take decisions in haste and uncertainty. Acknowledged dependence on military means, e.g. the early first use of nuclear weapons, can be presented by a determined opponent as an attempt at coercion.

In a crisis situation, recent developments in weapons technology, such as the increased accuracy of missile delivery systems and the reduction of the advance warning time, create incentives to deliver a pre-emptive strike. Those who feel that they are faced with a decision between capitulation or the opening of hostilities are unlikely to concentrate their attention on resolving the acute crisis, but will be thinking instead of the outcome of the seemingly inevitable war. Signals threatening military action are sent out to the other side with the aim of preventing the actual use of military power. But the other side cannot ignore the fact that it is being threatened. At best, the threat of deterrence sends out an ambiguous message presenting its addressee with the contradictions of concrete threat and the avowed aim of preventing war. But from that ambiguous message no unambiguous conclusion can be drawn. Even if both sides in the East-West conflict give priority in their military provision to the prevention of war, the use of deterrence to achieve that end always involves the risk that the end will not be achieved because of the means being held in readiness.

The response of the WCC

The public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament organized jointly by the WCC Sub-unit on Church and Society and the Commission of the Churches

on International Affairs in Amsterdam in 1981 devoted its attention to this syndrome of the inconsistencies in deterrence and its implementation in the form of military strategies. The aim of the hearing was to establish criteria by which to judge the morality of deterrence. I wish to highlight two elements from the record of the hearing which were important for the WCC's Sixth Assembly in Vancouver in 1983 and its unambiguous rejection of nuclear deterrence.

The first relates to the actual use of nuclear weapons and the somewhat problematic statement that ethically there is a difference in principle between conventional and nuclear weapons. We read in the report:

> In light of these special characteristics of nuclear weapons, and fully recognizing that there is no Christian consensus on the subject of war as such, we wish to state unequivocally that nuclear warfighting is morally wrong, whatever the circumstances.[1]

In principle, that already goes to the crux of the problem of nuclear deterrence. The question, however, on which a whole library of books has already been written, was and still is:

> whether the possession of, preparation for the use of, and readiness to use, nuclear weapons fall under the same moral condemnation as their actual use.

To that the Amsterdam report gives a carefully formulated answer:

> ... the readiness to do something wrong shares in the wrongness of the action itself. It would be an exaggeration to claim that the strategy of nuclear deterrence, and the weapons on which it depends, are as unmitigated an evil as an actual nuclear war would be. We believe, however, that they are evil, and that the possession of such weapons and the readiness to use them are wrong in the sight of God and should be treated as such by the churches.

And the churches did treat them as such at Vancouver. In its "Statement on Peace and Justice" the Assembly took up the conviction expressed by the panel at the Amsterdam hearing after it had heard a great number of expert witnesses:

> We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.[2]

As is well-known the Vancouver Assembly accepted that judgment by a large majority and with only a few abstentions.

On the assumption that this position is not only accepted by the ecumenical movement by majority vote but is also confirmed and accepted as binding, what are the elements of a security policy which is not simply limited to Europe or the northern hemisphere, but is global in scope?

There are, I think, two. First, we need to translate the moral-ethical rejection of nuclear weapons into a political strategy which will render them superfluous. Secondly, we need to find a substitute for deterrence which achieves more than mere prevention of war, but which is also a formulation of our Christian understanding of peace.

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[1]This and the following two quotations are taken from *Before It's Too Late*, P. Abrecht and N. Koshy eds, Geneva, WCC, 1983, p.29.

[2]*Gathered for Life*, report of the Sixth Assembly of the WCC, Vancouver 1983, David Gill ed., Geneva, WCC, 1983, p.137.

The WCC Sixth Assembly produced at least outlines for each of these two elements. It pointed out the direction in which the moral-ethical rejection of nuclear deterrence could be translated into political steps leading to disarmament. Clearly acknowledging that condemnation by the churches, however well-founded, will not automatically lead to the disappearance of even one nuclear warhead, and drawing on statements from previous assemblies such as Evanston 1954, it proposes that the churches should thoroughly examine their own implicit and explicit support for a policy based on the possession and use of nuclear weapons and should urge their respective governments to forge international legal instruments which, in a way analogous to the convention prohibiting biological weapons, would ban possession and use of these weapons under international law.

The second element, the formulation of a Christian understanding of peace, must begin from the tragically widening gulf between rich and poor, a problem in danger of becoming peripheral in face of the crisis in the economic system of the industrialized nations and the resultant mass unemployment. This crisis is neither fate nor simply a temporary fault in the system from which we can escape by careful corrections to the existing mechanisms or by approaching the future with vigour and determination, particularly as its consequences have now assumed global proportions. Its roots go back to the classic age of imperialism. The economic and social structures created at that time have survived the end of colonialism and shown remarkable regenerative ability. As the present crisis in the world economic and financial systems shows only too clearly, they are resistant to evolutionary changes and even to minor adaptations which would at least provide a minimum level of subsistence for all. For those who make up the majority of the world's population, the longer the present international system continues the more blatantly it is seen as a global power structure, designed to ensure the continued privileged existence of those who have always enjoyed it.

The interpenetration of power and violence, as I have written elsewhere, has in recent years affected all areas of life, and not only in those countries which we have been accustomed to call developing countries. Even in those countries which can be counted among the developed nations and societies of the world, political and social priorities have been subordinated to a concept of national security which knows no bounds, and attempts are made to justify this by the hoary paradox that we must prepare for war in order to preserve peace. That has led to militarization on a global scale without precedent in history, regardless of social system or political philosophy. It has produced that culture of violence which is dramatically reflected in the mass media, and it threatens gradually to undermine what remains of those forms of humane self-assertion presented by Christianity as alternatives to the rule of violence — as in the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount — which Christians have from time to time successfully practised. To repeat, it is not only nuclear weapons as such but the spirit and logic of the doctrine of deterrence as a whole which, even if it does not initiate it, consistently sustains and extends this process of progressive militarization with what could be irreversible consequences.

The WCC Sixth Assembly, particularly in the reports of its eight issue groups, made considerable progress in establishing criteria to serve as foundations for

strategies to build a world order of peace and justice, although it must be admitted that it did not always succeed in making their interdependence completely clear. Justice was defined in classic terms as the expression of the equality of all people, regardless of race, sex, age or origin, in the form of recognition of the fundamental rights enshrined in the declarations of human rights. That involves the right to self-determination and participation only in the political but also in the social and economic realms, and calls for a political framework to guarantee it. In regard to peace, the Vancouver documents develop from that a concept of security in which recognition and protection of the rights of all people within every nation is part of a concept of common security between nations, which in the long term will not be attained by collective military alliances or by arms limitation agreements alone. That is the context of the proposal for prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction in international law, which was first explicitly called for in 1954 at the Evanston Assembly and was taken up again at Vancouver. It is the translation of an ethical judgment into a politically practicable policy for nuclear weapons analogous in international law to the ban on biological weapons and soon, it is to be hoped, on chemical weapons. Theologically such a judgment is grounded in the view that the very existence of such weapons is incompatible with the biblical call to care for creation. In the search for a new concept of peace, there must a place for preserving the integrity of nature, as a criterion which enables and limits all human activity.

A Venturing Social Ethic

Roger L. Shinn

The human race today confronts a set of ethical decisions startling in their novelty, dazzling in their variety, and momentous in their consequences. New issues arise as science and technology enhance human power — or the power of some people and groups within nations and the world. People find themselves the masters or victims of new technologies and social organizations that change the directions of history faster than societies can decide whether the changes are desirable or harmful.

This generation has seen the discovery of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons; the revolution in biological knowledge including conquest of some diseases, the population explosion, the Green Revolution, and discoveries in human genetics; techniques in information-processing and speedy mass communication; that complex of issues connected with economics, ecology, and social policies. In all these cases the interaction of new knowledge with social power brings new possibilities and calls for new decisions.

Defining ethical decisions

The new decisions all have ethical meaning. That is, they involve human values. They liberate or oppress people. Sometimes the controllers of new technology are liberating themselves, perhaps oppressing others. Sometimes the situation is more complicated: those who possess technological power have hardly had time to rejoice in their achievements when they begin to suspect that they are being oppressed by the social-technical structures they have created.

But if the new decisions are almost always ethical, rarely are they solely ethical. Their ethical import is embedded in a social-technological matrix. It was not ethical insight that eliminated smallpox and reduced malaria. It was not religious prophets or sages who multiplied the food and protein production of the world. It was not church leaders or philosophers who discovered, first, that the earth contained vast resources of liquid fuel and, second, that those resources would be largely consumed within a foreseeable future. Scientists and technologists made the basic discoveries. Social organizations and governments carried them out, often in areas geographically and culturally remote from the original research. Economists and anthropologists discovered the complex effects of such achievements on social structures, including patterns of employment, distribution of wealth, urbanization. At every stage of the process there was interaction between ethical questions of human purpose and questions of technique.

Hence ethics becomes less and less a matter of locating a set of strictly ethical questions. Likewise, the management of technology becomes less and less a mat-

ter of isolating sets of strictly technological questions. Instead, human beings with ethical concern must locate the ethical aspects of decisions that do not belong to an inherited discipline of ethics but that are usually considered political, economic, or technological.

One obvious mark of the present situation is that persons and societies must increasingly make ethical decisions for which there are no precise precedents in traditions. This is not to deny all continuity with tradition. The past may reward us with its heritage at just those times when we are most ready to dismiss it as irrelevant. But the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, the Upanishads and the Analects of Confucius, the writings of Plato and of Spinoza do not answer if we ask them: "Should we rearrange DNA? Where shall we look for liquid energy when the petroleum is gone? Are we wise to extract more calories per acre of farmland at the cost of gaining fewer calories of food for each calorie of energy expended in fertilizers, insecticides, and transport?"

At the World Council of Churches' conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1979, the report of Section 10, "Towards a New Christian Social Ethic and New Social Policies for the Churches", included this sentence: "The Bible and Christian tradition are silent on many decisions that Christians must make today, e.g. about the ethical evaluation of specific discoveries in genetics." The statement did not signal a rebellion against scriptural ethics; the report immediately went on to say: "We do not live in an age so 'enlightened' that we have no need for biblical guidance."[1] The conferees, without renouncing biblical authority, were declaring that Christians today have to do their own uniquely contemporary work in responding ethically to new situations.

Interestingly, though the section argued in minute detail on many a theme of that report, there was no dissent on those sentences just quoted. Included in the section were people of diverse beliefs about scripture and tradition. Some put great reliance on binding ethical laws in the Bible; others were more situational in their ethics. It is the nature of the ecumenical movement to include such variety. But nobody questioned that our generation is venturing into areas where scripture is silent.

It is unlikely that in most past centuries ecumenical councils or the synods and assemblies of various churches would have formulated the statement quoted above from the conference at MIT. In our era the churches are not only entering a new stage of history; they are highly aware that they are doing so. That awareness requires that they develop new ways of making decisions and acting.

Christian history and Christian ethics

Christian tradition itself offers some guidance for determining how to appropriate that tradition and how to revise it. The Christian community from the beginning was an innovating community. It responded to God's acts in Jesus

[1]*Faith and Science in an Unjust World*, report of the WCC conference on "Faith, Science and the Future". Vol. 2: Reports and Recommendations, Paul Abrecht, ed., Geneva, WCC, 1980, p.153.

Christ, and it looked to God's continuing acts. At several stages in its history it had to decide how to respond to changes in its social and historical situations.

In the New Testament itself the community argued about the meaning of faithfulness as it moved out of Jerusalem and Galilee into the wider Mediterranean world. How much of the Jewish law should be binding on Gentiles? In what ways should Christians relate to the urban economies of Antioch and Athens and Rome? How should theology accept and resist the ethics of Platonism and Stoicism? The Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, and the Gospel according to John take up these issues repeatedly.

Another great change came when some Christians found themselves in positions of government. The teachings of Jesus, recorded in the Gospels, say little or nothing about conduct befitting magistrates and emperors. The Old Testament, of course, said much more on this subject. For better and for worse, Christians developed various ethics for the exercise of political power. Centuries later some Christians described the ancient alliance of the church with imperial power as the "fall" of the church; others sought through the ages to call government to ethical accountability and to act responsibly in government.

Eventually in western Europe the church related itself to new political and economic institutions. It related — and still tries tortuously to relate itself — to various nationalisms. It adapted to or resisted industrialization and the rival creeds of capitalism and socialism.

In other cultural situations — in Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Pacific islands — the churches are constantly working on the task of building an ethic that takes into account their historical contexts. When do they welcome the ethical sensitivities of indigenous cultures and when do they discern a divine call to modify the indigenous ethic — as, they believe, Jesus in his historical situation did both?

The starting point of Christian ethics is the response of the historical Christian community to the God whom it recognizes in Christ and whose guidance it seeks in continuing history. The church "seeks" the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). It sees signs of that kingdom in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and in further stirrings of history. But it sees also resistance to that kingdom in the structures of the world and in the hearts of people — including, of course, Christians. So it prays "Thy kingdom come". And it struggles to find the ways of faithfulness in a world of conflict.

Hence its ethic is not a deductive system, elaborated from a set of given propositions. It is a venturing ethic, the ethic of a people in pilgrimage — and therein lies its grandest possibilities and its perils. Faithfulness sometimes means constancy in the face of temptations; but faithfulness sometimes means innovation in response to new opportunities.

In the twentieth century — more obviously, it seems to us, than in most of the past — the Christian community must relate itself to two kinds of reality: the social and the technical. The old realities of sin and grace, of divine and demonic promptings in history, of steadfastness in the faith and loyalty to a kingdom yet to come — these work themselves out in the midst of social and technical realities. Each of these realities requires attention in turn.

The social reality

Every human discovery or invention has a social dimension. That is especially true of technological achievements, because new techniques are more readily adopted and exploited by societies than new artistic and religious insights. Social systems and social arrangements of power have much to do with the impact of new technologies.

Thus hybridization of new food-producing plants may bring relief to hungry people; or it may, by concentrating new power among the wealthy and aggressive, heighten unemployment and consequently hunger. New industries, increasing gross national products, usually enrich some people and impoverish others. The transfer of technologies from rich to poor societies may bring economic benefits to the poor societies or it may weaken them by increasing their dependence on the wealthy.

A few new technologies are, almost by definition, beneficial. A case is the elimination of smallpox. (This is not to say that such a benefit does not bring accompanying problems, but nobody, I hope, would want to solve the problems by reviving smallpox.) A few technologies are, almost by definition, pernicious. An example is certain kinds of weapons. But most technologies are ambivalent; they can be used for good and ill. If we ask whether any specific technology is good or bad in its consequences, we may learn that it is good for some people and bad for others. The consequences depend largely upon the social situation of the people affected.

Ecumenical ethical inquiry by its very nature brings together diverse groups of people, people who might never meet one another except in the ecumenical venture. They meet across national lines. And sometimes people of the same country, who would never meet each other at home, meet under the auspices of the world church. The interactions are sometimes abrasive, involving as they do people of different theological, geographical, cultural, linguistic, ethic and economic experiences. Some groups, who have little power in their home countries or in the international politics of the United Nations, have testified that they get serious attention in the World Council of Churches. Other groups, accustomed to the privileges of wealth and power, learn in the WCC that all groups are minorities in a world setting.

Closely related to social situation is ideology. I use the term non-pejoratively to stand for any conception or picture of society that helps to guide action. In this sense ideology is essential to living. Those without ideology, if there are any, are helpless. There is no sense in trying to eliminate ideology from thought and action, although there are good reasons for trying to purge ideologies of errors and vicious purposes.

The problem of ideology is that it is more than a way of understanding the world; it is also a way of perceiving the world. As a guide to sifting out information, determining what is relevant and what is irrelevant, it affects the capacity of persons or groups to learn about their world. A dogmatic ideology — whether populist or elitist, right wing or left wing — tends to prescribe answer to all questions and to destroy receptivity to the experiences and insights of people with different ideologies. The clash of ideologies — a familiar experience in the

ecumenical movement — is often painful. It is also often enlightening. It is an essential part of ethical inquiry in the contemporary world.[2]

The technical reality

As important for some purposes as social and ideological reality is technical reality. Human experience through the ages — and especially in this twentieth century — often shows that new technologies offer new alternative courses of action and require new ethical decisions. A helpful ethic, especially when it engages in judgments about actual policies for action, must be technically competent.

Churches, *qua* churches, have no special competence in technology, although some of their members do. Christians will not find the technical knowledge they need by consulting their scriptures and traditions. They need to reckon with information, some of it unavailable before this century or even this decade.

Theologians and ideologists sometimes seem to scorn information, as though their doctrines and social philosophies made reliance on new information unnecessary. They may say that there are no naked facts apart from theological or social meanings. That proposition, if not held too dogmatically, communicates considerable truth. All people and groups appropriate facts within a world of meaning. Yet there is an impressive "objectivity" about some facts, whether ideologically we seek them or resist them. Nuclear weapons can destroy people regardless of their race and politics. Polluted rivers catch fire in capitalist and socialist societies alike. Contagious diseases ignore national boundaries. Human life requires not only a measurable caloric intake but also specifiable kinds of foods. It is not religion that provides such information. When faith drives people to act on such information, as often it does, wise action requires the most accurate information.

Increasingly in this highly technological world the ethical act must be the informed act. And the informed act must often incorporate expert knowledge.

Dependence on the expert can be extremely irritating. A healthy democratic spirit prefers a self-reliant willingness to make decisions and take responsibility for them, rather than rely on an expert elite. There is some satisfaction in recognizing that we are all experts on a few subjects — "I know best where my shoe pinches" — and inexpert on many. Most of us at some time or other want competent doctors to prescribe treatment, skilled mechanics to design and repair machinery, expert pilots to fly airplanes, knowledgeable farmers to raise crops, trained linguists to translate foreign languages, accurate accountants to keep banks and businesses functioning, meticulously educated engineers to design bridges and buildings. If some of us can perform one or two of these tasks for ourselves, none of us can do them all.

But just at this point of dependence, the technical reality meets the social reality. Just as I do not want a kindly but ignorant surgeon to invade my body, so also I do not want a skilful but malicious practitioner. When I trust experts, as

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[2]In this discussion of ideology I am greatly abbreviating ideas developed in my book *Forced Options: Social Decisions for the 21st Century*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1982, Chapter 12, "Science, Faith, and Ideology in Policy Decisions". That chapter, in turn, relies on ideas developed in study groups of the WCC and first published in my essay "Faith, Science and the Nuclear Decision", *Anticipation*, No. 26, June 1979, pp.53-57.

often I must, their very expertise may be my undoing if they do not care about me or understand my reality. Economically poor societies rightly distrust the most expert economic advice if it comes from economists oriented towards the values of the rich world.

Thus the two realities — social and technical — must be brought together if the world is to meet responsibly the fateful ethical decisions of our time. That is not easy. It is hard enough to bring about healthy interaction of people with different social realities. It is about as hard to get genuinely interdisciplinary conversation among specialists in the many diverse fields of modern knowledge. It is, therefore, almost impossible to get helpful cooperation — difficult to get even intelligent argument — when the fractured social realities *and* the splintered technical realities are thrown together. Yet the survival of civilization probably depends on such interaction.

The contribution of "Church and Society"

The distinctive contribution of Paul Abrecht, directing the World Council's Sub-unit on Church and Society, has been to engender the kind of interactions that our world needs and seldom sees. His genius has been to instigate ceaseless debates among those who concentrate on the social reality and among those who concentrate on the technical reality and then to require both groups to face each other. If the results are sometimes chaotic, the chaos is itself revealing. It is more honest and more authentic than the complacency or dogmatism of ordered activity among those who have never been disturbed by the actual disorder of our world.

In recent years Paul Abrecht has guided study processes on the just, participatory and sustainable society; on worldwide problems of energy; on genetics; and, in cooperation with the Churches' Commission on International Affairs, on nuclear weapons and disarmament. One result has been an impressive body of literature, useful to churches and often recognized far outside the churches. A still more important result has been the involvement of many people, ranging from devoted church members to people otherwise alienated from the churches, in the inquiries.

Some scientists outside the church have exclaimed in amazement that the churches were interested in them and their work. Some scientists inside the churches have been equally amazed that the churches called on them for their professional competence. Renowned leaders in science and government have given freely their time and energy to WCC projects. Some, engaged in lonely ethical struggles within their professions, have welcomed reinforcement from the churches; occasionally a scientist has been heard to speak of an increased influence within the profession because he or she was being taken seriously by the churches.

There are, of course, critics of the methods of Church and Society. Able people, deeply immersed in the social reality, have grumbled about "elitism" in the effort to get the most technically competent participants, whatever their religious or political orientation, engaged in ethical inquiries. And some scientists have felt "put upon" because they had to endure ideological harangues from which they were insulated in their laboratories and research centres. But others from both groups have felt the disturbing and cleansing experience of exposure

to discomforting ideas and people. On occasion, it seems, a WCC gathering, arranged by a tiny staff with a minuscule budget, has faced an issue with more rigor and honesty than comparable conferences of the United Nations, arranged on a far grander scale.

Obviously the methods of Church and Society are not the only methods appropriate for the WCC. Despite that too debonair reference in the last paragraph to minuscule budgets, genuinely ecumenical gatherings are expensive. Few of the world's church members can participate directly. There are many opportunities for street-corner ecumenism, for self-generated regional projects, for gallant local movements sustained by the wider church only through prayer. Obviously, too, there are many occasions today, as in all Christian history, when church people know what to do and lack only the will and courage to do it.

But vast forces armed with new knowledge and new technologies are changing the shape of the world. The churches cannot simply watch them, occasionally lamenting or cheering them. Christians need to engage them in theological questioning, sometimes using secular and sometimes doctrinal languages.

Each decade sees new encounters of social realities and technical realities and of the two with each other. The churches cannot enter these without determined efforts at self-education. They cannot sit them out without neglecting God's world. By some grace of humble courage and courageous humility, the churches may become agents of God's judgment and mercy in our portentous time.

Science and Faith

Paulos Gregorios

No one can start thinking on any subject without some prior assumptions about reality. This is so in philosophy or in physics. Most scientists operate with a naive realism about the external world. In modern physics, quantum theory cannot be so sanguine about the existence of that external world independent of consciousness.

The new debate

The problem becomes complicated because most physicists have little training in philosophy and most philosophers have never practised as investigators in modern physics. Any creative discussion on the assumptions in physics about the nature of reality would need dialogue between competent philosophers and competent physicists, both equipped and willing to dialogue with each other.

It requires also some knowledge of the history of western thought if these assumptions are to be spotted and brought out. The biggest transition that led to the development of modern science is the transfer of intellectual authority from the medieval European Christian church with its dogmas, hierarchy and canon law, to nature and its empirical exploration by human reason. Nature was the new source of all knowledge, and reason was the tool by which to appropriate that knowledge, through empirical observations and experiments. The authority of the medieval European Catholic Church had now two contenders — the witness of the *scriptures and of faith*, which the Reformers adduced, and the witness of *nature and reason*, which modern science advanced.

These two witnesses — that of the Reformation and that of modern science — have since then been in conflict. Any attempt to settle the conflict between faith and science or between revelation and reason must take into account the historical origin of these two witnesses, and the reliability of each in the present situation has to be freshly evaluated.

Positivism and its legacy

Modern science, philosophically speaking, has gone through the stages of logical positivism, logical empiricism and logical analysis. The very concept of "empirical verification", once the bastion of modern science, today holds re-

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• The author, hoping to encourage the dialogue and debate that he here advocates, showed this essay to K.V. Laurikainen, one of the scientists he discusses. Laurikainen's replies have led Metropolitan Gregorios to make some revisions of his essay. Other comments by Laurikainen are included as an appendix to this essay (marked A, B and C in the text).

duced philosophical respectability. Philosophers of science, though as yet not all scientists, generally recognize that scientific propositions are neither non-subjectively objective nor unqualifiedly proved or verified. Many people today, who value science very highly, would still recognize that its methods give access only to a small segment of reality and that it is only one of several ways of knowing.

There are still those who would staunchly defend some form of positivism, by ruling out all questions of fundamental assumptions as "meaningless", since such questions are not accessible to the methods of science. Even the questioning by the theory of relativity of concepts like space and time as having any objective existence does not daunt these stalwart defenders of positivism. Though outmoded concepts like "ether" and "phlogiston" have been abandoned by science, it cannot do without concepts like space, time and motion which are now recognized to be relative and not absolute (appendix, A). Newton, who claimed "I formulate no hypotheses", did not realize how the hypotheses of absolute space, time and motion were necessary for his way of perceiving reality.

The revolutions in scientific thought have taken place at the two extremes of size — at the micro-level of the atom and the macro-level of the universe. Quantum theory and the special theory of relativity, though they were proposed and largely accepted some two generations ago, have still not been fully assimilated by people at large, who continue to operate on the basis of generalizations about Newtonian mechanics, which breaks down for small masses and for high energies (appendix, B). What should worry us is the fact that "pictorial thinking" itself breaks down in those new general theories. Our assumption that reality is something we can conceive or picture in our minds is today collapsing.

Physics no longer speaks about what *there is*, but only about *phenomena* or what can be *observed*. It is no longer the external world and its independent existence that is in question; *the capacity of the knower to know things as they are through science is today in question*. Here scientific dogma helps many scientists to keep their heads in the sand.

Some bold physicists, even with strong positivist proclivities, have begun to recognize the problem, but would still reject it as a non-problem since they are interested only in the mathematical description of the regularities in observed phenomena and not in any metaphysical statements about the nature of reality or the nature of the knowing mind.

It is as a representative of modern physics that K.V. Laurikainen of the Department of High Energy Physics in the University of Helsinki says:

> There is now more reason than before to ask if there is any outer world at all without consciousness. The investigation of the basic structure of matter has disclosed an abstract structure which can scarcely be thought of as existing independently of consciousness.[1]

He holds that positivism is a drive to avoid unclear and ambiguous statements, and to ask for empirical demonstrations; it can hold good only within the

[1]*Questions of Knowledge and Belief at the End of the 20th Century*, University of Helsinki, Research Institute for Theoretical Physics, pre-print series in theoretical physics, 23 May 1983, p.30.

requirements of moderation — that is, around the centre of the scale, where it is operationally productive, though not exact or final.

Laurikainen's discussion about that old bone of contention between Christian religion and modern science — the theory of evolution — seeks to show the problems of science and faith in a new way. Rejecting the notion that all things are determined and that everything that happens can be explained in terms of strict causality formulated in universal laws, Laurikainen proposes the idea of "statistical causality". This means that while the actions of individual "particles" cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, they do follow certain laws of statistical probability. This means, according to the Finnish physicist, that indetermination appears side by side with a limited determination; there is "free will" or "freedom" on the individual scale. This "free will" which shows itself in individual events he calls the "factor" in nature which influences the decision of a particular particle to behave in a particular way (appendix, C).

In every individual mutation in biological evolution, this "factor" is always present; using the scientific method, which deals only with causality and not with teleology, we cannot give a full description of mutations which are individual events:

> Purely scientific criticism scarcely motivates any more such a rejection of teleology. We can, on the contrary, see clear purposefulness in living organisms, and an endeavour towards certain aims. We can see there the effects of free will.[2]

What Prof. Laurikainen seeks to establish is that there are two elements in nature, namely causality-determinism and free will,[3] and that science cannot cope with the latter aspect. Therefore, science can make statements only on the basis of a statistical causality. We can describe the new conception of causality as if there were an "unknown hidden hand" which regulates things but appears as freedom at the individual level. Mutations belong to the individual level, although they imply changes which appear later also at the macro-level.

The concept opens a new logical possibility. It presupposes that determinism appears only in a statistical ensemble of similar events but not in the individual. The determinism has to be such that it can overcome all the individual "decisions" in their variety. To think of such a statistical determinism in nature is, it seems to me, to attribute some kind of consciousness and purpose to both the individual and the aggregate in nature itself.

Laurikainen finds fault with the early positivistic efforts to explain everything in terms of causality — absolute causality ruling out any form of teleology or purpose. For him it is important to have a paradigm of nature which combines determinism and free will, and which therefore requires reality to be explained in terms of both causality and teleology. This is Laurikainen's way of escaping the problems in the theory of evolution. We have no way of exhaustively explaining individual mutations, but on the aggregate they show a pattern which indicates some element of purpose — free will at the individual level, over-ruled and fitted into a pattern at the aggregate level. (This requires teleology both at the individual and aggregate levels.) But once teleology is accepted along with causality

[2]*Ibid.*, p.75.
[3]*Ibid.*, p.71.

as the twin principles of explanation in modern science, it matters little whether that teleology is only at the individual level or at the aggregate level also.

The basic change that Laurikainen proposes is rather subtle. Most scientists recognize the presence of both chance and necessity in nature. Causality applies only to the level of necessity, and in so far as statistical causality or laws of probability are applied to individual events, some element of necessity is imposed at the macro-level. (Modern science has been reasonably happy with that arrangement, and the attempts of certain religious apologists to introduce God's purpose in the guidance of chance have not held up very well.)

Laurikainen finds it essential to introduce the element of *choice* in place of *chance*, choice implying free will and purpose and teleology, which the scientist has in the past fairly scrupulously sought to avoid.

The difference between chance and choice is that chance has no cause, but choice is "caused by the will". Once the element of choice is introduced, the mechanistic-causality model breaks down. But Laurikainen's contention is that the (mechanistic) notion of absolute causality has already broken down in quantum physics, and therefore there is no need to be shy about using the statistical causality[4] model in all fields of knowledge.

From there Laurikainen takes off into a philosophically unacceptable justification of the Christian Protestant religion as the highest form of religion achieved by humanity. "What is called 'chance' can be seen *as an expression of God's creative will*" (italics Laurikainen's).[5] He is obviously trying also to defend the theory of evolution against recent attacks by creationists. In the context of Scandinavian fundamentalism, which today shows a degree of virulence and insularity similar to its American counterpart, Laurikainen's concern is understandable: he wants to save both the theory of evolution and the Christian Protestant religion, as well as to uphold modern science.

But his scheme appears too neat — to cluster determinism-causality-knowledge-science on one side and freedom-teleology-belief-religion on the other. Laurikainen carries the principle of complementarity too far (so does Niels Bohr) — even to a point where it becomes compartmentalization. Complementarity in atomic physics should not be taken as in any sense final. It means only that a wave-understanding or a particle-understanding cannot, by itself, do justice to *observed* reality. But to claim that the two together can give us insight into the true nature of reality itself is, to say the least, presumptive. It is perhaps even more presumptive to find justification for religion in the principle of complementarity, even if that complementarity is shifted, by sleight of hand, from wave-particle duality to causality-teleology duality.[6]

Psychic and physical approaches

Nevertheless, the germs are here of some new ideas which are extremely im-

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[4]The notion of "statistical causality" seems also to have been proposed by Soviet Academician V. Fock in his discussion with Niels Bohr during the former's visit to Copenhagen in 1957. See Laurikainen's other very interesting paper on "Wolfgang Pauli and Philosophy", University of Helsinki pre-print series in theoretical physics, 24 January 1983.

[5]*Op. cit.*, p.85.

[6]Laurikainen writes to me that "this is what the Copenhagen philosophy means, if 'teleology' is replaced by 'indeterminism'" (hand-written note on the margin of my paper). A more detailed argument by Laurikainen is given in the appendix, especially C.

portant for the future dialogue between the two contenders in western civilization, science and the Christian faith. The notion of statistical causality is an adaptation of Jung's ill-understood concept of "synchronicity".[7] Bohr resisted a concept like "synchronicity" as a principle of explanation related to causality and teleology. Wolfgang Pauli (1900-1958), the Swiss scientist who was also a Jewish convert to Roman Catholic Christianity, later was assistant to Max Born at Gottingen and a co-worker of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. At the age of 19 he wrote a much praised encyclopaedia article on the theory of relativity, an article praised by Einstein himself; and at 28 years of age he became a full professor at the Erdgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich.

In 1952 Pauli collaborated with C.G. Jung in putting out a volume on *Naturerklärung und Psyche* in which Jung first introduced his concept of "synchronicity" ("Synchronizität als ein Prinzip akausaler Zusammenhänge").

Jung's synchronicity is an *acausal* principle — one that rejects the notion of absolute causality, which in some way implies absolute time. If time is relative, then causality also has to be relative. That anyone can see, since the cause generally has to precede the effect in time. "Final cause" is a teleological principle. But synchronicity goes beyond the fact that Jung takes seriously the idea that not only time but also space is relative. Newtonian mechanics assumed an absolute space in which matter moved. Jung, on the other hand, tried to understand, not Newton's mechanically conceived matter moving in absolute space, but rather the workings of the different layers of consciousness. Jung was always in personal dialogue with Einstein, Pauli, and Bohr,[8] although Bohr and Jung found each other incompatible.

That was a time when the general theory of relativity was still considered as something possible in the immediate future, linking the micro-world of the atom and the macro-world of the universe in a single equation, just as mass, energy and the speed of light were inter-related in the famous equation ($E = MC^2$) of the special theory of relativity. Jung was on a different track — to find a principle of correlation between mind and matter, between consciousness and its object. And he was sure that we could never do it at the positivistic-rational level of academic science, but had to take into account the pre-rational gropings of the soul like dreams, alchemy, astrology and the *I-Ching*. This pre-rational perception is symbolic in a different way from the symbolics of discursive language and mathematics. It is the kind of symbolism we encounter in the archtypes of myths and dreams, which people like Mircea Eleade have investigated.

Jung introduced the concept of synchronicity as acausal — as diametrically opposed to determinism, to absolute time and to causality as a principle. He therefore advanced it not as an absolute truth, but as a counter-weight to the notion of causality. Two events, separated in space, but not in time, and bearing no ostensible causal relation to each other, are seen as bearing some meaningful relation other than just *chance* coincidence.

This is in some sense akin to what modern science abhors as "magic"; it challenges the fundamentals of modern science, or so it appeared to many science

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[7]In physics the idea of statistical causality was advanced as early as 1927. But the Copenhagen reinterpretation seems to be affected by Jung's ideas.

[8]Ira Progoff, *Jung, Synchronicity and Human Destiny: Noncausal Dimensions of Human Experience*, New York, Delta, 1973, pp.3-4.

practitioners who virtually ostracized Jung from the scientific community. Jung cited the authority of Avicenna and Albertus Magnus; that only confirmed the prejudice that Jung's ideas were pre-scientific and therefore in some sense anti-scientific. Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Thomas Aquinas, in a passage cited by Jung said:

> I discovered an instructive account (of magic) in Avicenna's *Liber sextus naturalis*, which says that a certain power (*virtus*) to alter things indwells in the human soul and subordinates the other things to her, particularly when she is swept into a great excess of love or hate or the like. When therefore the soul of a man falls into a great excess of any passion, it can be proved *by experiment* (italics added) that it binds things and alters them as desired, and for a long time I did not believe it, but after I had read the necromantic books and others of the kind on signs and magic, I found that emotionality (*affectio*) of the human soul is the chief cause of all these things.[9]

Not, of course, that Jung believed in magic, which he too admits is a pre-scientific way of perceiving reality. He would say that magic, however, is a pre-scientific way of expressing the perennial reality that "the psychic process itself is just as much 'arranged' as the coinciding representation which anticipates the external process".[10] Jung argued that it was only in the eighteenth century that causality became the sole explanatory principle, and that prior to that scientists themselves (e.g. Kepler, Descartes) used a principle of simultaneous non-causal correspondence between psychic and physical realities.

We know today, thanks to David Hume, Thorstein Veblen, Bertrand Russell and others, that causality is after all "a habit of thought" of human beings living in time. Logically speaking, we see only *post hoc* but not *propter hoc.* In our experiments B has always followed A, and we take it that B is caused by A, but for this there is no logical ground.

Insights from ancient Buddhism

The difficulties of causality as a principle of interpretation had been clearly shown long ago by that little known genius of Indian thought, Nagarjuna.[11] This South Indian Brahmin became a Buddhist and taught at the ancient Buddhist University of Nalanda in the first quarter of the second century of our era. He encountered the kind of substantialist realism about world and self that we see prevalent today. The Buddhist monasteries and religious schools taught *sarvastivada*, or the doctrine that the multiple entities of the world have all substantive existence, as does also the knowing self. They had gone through a profound debate about the existence of the self and the world — five centuries of debate in the Buddhist monasteries, a debate in many ways more philosophically profound than that which preceded the era of modern science in the medieval European Christian monasteries (which was also impressively profound). The dominant philosophical schools that emerged around the second century B.C. was the *sarvastivadins* or the pluralists or atomists.

Nagarjuna, following the Middle Path of Buddhist philosophy, questioned this naive realism, by a profound analysis of the knowing process. The world of

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[9]*De mirabilibus mundi*, incunabulum in the Zurich Zentralbibliothek, undated, cited by Jung, *Synchronicity*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p.45.
[10]*Synchronicity, op. cit.,* p.46.
[11]For a compendium of Nagarjuna's thought see K. Venkata-Ramanan, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*, Rutland, Vermont, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1966. Reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978.

convention is a creation (*nirmana*) of the knowing mind (*citta*), a self-conscious principle of understanding; this knowledge of empirical reality (*vyavahara*) is operationally true, but devoid of ultimacy; it is a veiled truth (*samvrti*), an elaboration of a pluriform world (*prapanca*) through concepts and conventional entities, through names (*nama*) and attributes or indications (*laksana*) or meanings (*artha*).

Does the world "really" exist, independent of our consciousness? Nagarjuna and the Middle Path would answer: it would be wrong to say that it exists, for what we experience is only a veiled reality; it would be wrong also to say that it does not exist, for that would be to deny the reality of our experience. One cannot answer such questions in any simple way; one has to deepen one's awareness and understanding. Things are known by their names and attributes; they are objects of cognition, occasions for concepts, thoughts and emotions; knowledge is produced by the interaction between subject, but both subject and object, and therefore knowledge, are conditioned. The world as we experience it is the consequence of this conditionedness of subject and object.

When we cling to this conditioned knowledge as ultimate, we fall into error. We do the same by dismissing it as illusion. To know that the universe is originated by the presence of conditions in subject and object is higher knowledge; but to cling even to that as somehow ultimate would again be gross error. For the conditioned nature of the universe is not its ultimate nature; it is only the nature of the universe as perceived by us under certain conditions. One must not make the other mistake of making an ultimate distinction between the conditioned and the unconditioned. They are one and the same undivided being, to which the knower and the known also belong. All decision and all determination are conditioned, and not ultimate, says Nagarjuna.

Here is probably where Nagarjuna would criticize modern science. It clings to its concepts and theories as if they were ultimate and unconditioned, and with a naive greed to the identities and differences established, and to the operational possibilities unveiled. To cling to the conditioned and the determinate is to lose the ultimate that lies beyond.

Causality is one of these conditioned perceptions; neither time nor causality is ultimate. Rejection of their absolute character brings to light their relativity. Time and causality are not unreal, but real under certain conditions, i.e. relative. This raises, for Nagarjuna, the question of the relation between being and becoming. The world of becoming has its ground in the world of being. That is why it should not be dismissed as unreal or as illusion. But being is not determinate. The determinate world of becoming arises out of the indeterminate reality of being. The ultimate is neither determinate nor conceptually graspable, for concepts can grasp only the conditioned and the determinate. The discussion of Nagarjuna on causality is to be seen in this context.

There were two non-Buddhist school of thought against which Nagarjuna had to contend — the *Sankhya* and the *Vaisesika*. *Sankhya* holds that the ultimate principles are two — consciousness and nature, or *purusa* and *prakrti*.

The *Sankhya*[12] view of causality was that cause and effect are ultimately related in terms of identity. The effect must have been present in the cause, otherwise where did it come from? The technical name for this doctrine is *Satkaryavada*. The manifest universe is an effect of the unmanifest which is its cause, and in which it is present. The *Sankhyakarika*, the classical text of *Sankhya*, in its Karikas IX, XV and XVI, puts forward three (or five which can be reduced to three) reasons for this view: (a) non-being can produce only non-being; (b) the effect is of the same material as the cause, different only in manifestation; and (c) a specific effect needs a specific cause.

It was this doctrine of causality to which Nagarjuna gave battle. The *Sankhya* view was that there is identity in essence or potency, but difference in manifestation, between cause and effect. The analytical school of Buddhism (which had basically the same methods and approach as modern analytical schools of western philosophy), the *Abhidharma* thinkers, analyzed causality further, and classified four different types: the productive (*hetuka*), the objective (*alambana*), the immediately preceding (*samanantara*) and the mastering (*adhipati*). Nagarjuna takes each of these four kinds of causality apart by skilful analysis which reduces each to absurdity. The pyrotechnics of the argumentation need not detain us here, fascinating though they are. The point that Nagarjuna goes on to make is that space, time and causality, on which modern science based itself, are conceptually problematic. The fact that they yield operationally significant information should not lead us into the trap of thinking that this way of understanding is the most important.

One can go through the analytic processes only in order to leave them behind to go on to wiser pursuits. The analysis of things, the criticism of concepts, the cultivation of the moral life, are all useful steps on the path to wisdom, provided one does not get trapped and settle down in any of them as in any sense ultimate. These should lead us on in the urge for the real, the true, the ultimate: the *prajnaparamita*, the transcending of consciousness — crossing to the other side of subject-object thinking with its conceptual categories like space, time and causality.

The Buddhist view of *prajnaparamita* insists that science, philosophy and moral discipline are doors through which one has to pass, and not houses in which to settle down. This is not to minimize the importance of empirical knowledge, conceptual clarity or moral discipline. All three are not only necessary, but the world is the place where one can find these three doors. And Nagarjuna does not disparage this world, nor dispute doctrines with passion in order to establish his own. His passion in debate is only to demolish all dogmatic certainty about any form of conceptual finality. The conditioned has to be transcended, not conceptually, but in experience. All dogmatic systems, including one built upon Nagarjuna's own premises, would be conditioned, and therefore have to be transcended in order to complete one's pilgrimage to the Transcendent Unconditioned, where concepts simply cease.

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[12]For a detailed study, see G.J. Larson, *Classical Sankhya: an Interpretation of its History and Meaning*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd revised ed., 1979. The *Sankhya* school is one of the oldest in India, and like Platonism in the West undergoes periodic criticisms and revivals.

This is basically the classical Christian view, which is quite different from what has nourished the West since the sixth century. In classical Christianity, the issue was squarely posed by a leading rhetorician of the fourth century Byzantine Empire — Eunomius. Eunomius, who died about 395 A.D., was the Arian bishop of Cyzicus in Asia Minor. He was so sanguine about the capacity of the human mind to understand everything that he held that God himself, the Unoriginate, was supremely understandable and that there was nothing that concepts and language could not capture.

He established his views with a clarity that reminds one of Wittgenstein, but also with a polemic passion which we do not today associate with great scholars. For him the essence of religion itself was not in worship or rites and symbols, but in exact doctrines.[13] He has great kinship with the spirit of the West.

Limits of conceptual knowledge

A new approach to the problems of science and faith demands a basic questioning of the possibilities of language and of the conceptual or mathematical language which is the mainstay of science. Faith falls into error when it seeks to imitate or emulate science in conceptual precision and clarity. The dogma trap comes from this desire to distill religious truth into precise propositions.

Faith is essentially a relationship to the whole of reality — in terms of rootage of foundation as well as expectation or destiny, and the consequences that ensue from these for life choices. It is an attitude, an experience of reality, an approach to life, which cannot be exhaustively described in terms of concepts.

Here again, the discovery of the limits of precise conceptual knowledge should not lead us to a vain temptation to despise it altogether or to downgrade it.

In the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, this problem was ably and classically formulated in the fourth century by Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330 to ca. 395 A.D.). This Asian thinker (he wrote in Greek but was not Greek) had a high notion of *epinoia* (concept) and *akolouthia* (systematic thinking). *Epinoia* is notion, conceiving of an idea, a mental creation. According to Gregory,

> all things whatever time has discovered as useful and beneficial for the life of human beings have been discovered in no other way than through *epinoia*.[14]

And he defines *epinoia* as "the method of discovering things unknown through the following up of the first notion regarding the object of study, searching out the adjoining steps, in order to advance to further discoveries".[15]

He is in fact describing the scientific method of his time. It is a step by step advance to the limits of knowledge, beginning with first notions, discovering new ones through experience or experiment, relating the new knowledge to the previous notions, until "we gradually find our way to the limits of the studied objects".[16]

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[13]See Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* Lib III. Tom IX:54 PG 45:877 D. Erg.Tr. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. V, p.238 A.
[14]*Contra Eunomium*, II, 181, 182, PG 45:969; NPNF V:268 A.
[15]*Ibid.*
[16]*Ibid.*

For Gregory of Nyssa, in contrast to Eunomius, this human conceptual capacity to advance to the limits of subject-object knowledge is the most precious of all the faculties given by the Creator to humankind. Gregory even quotes scripture to prove his point:

> Who has put wisdom in the internal organs, and who has given understanding to the mind (Job 38:35).

In reply to Eunomius, who disparaged the human mind as capable of devising the most improbable errors and non-existent things, Gregory says:

> The movement of the *epinoia* towards the vain and unprofitable is no evidence for its incapacity for the profitable, but is sure proof for its not being incapable of what is beneficial and necessary for the psyche.

And for Nyssa the idea that faith or religion consists in certain beliefs or doctrines is the distinguishing peculiarity of unbelief! To put it in his own words:

> To believe that true religion consists only in dogmas — what is this but the special characteristic of the pagans?[17]

His argument is not that faith consists in feelings or in psychic experiences. He clearly states that it is in the true worship of God and in the sacramental mysteries of the church that one expresses and experiences the faith, i.e. "in sealing with the sign of the cross, prayer, baptism, the absolution of sins, the eagerness to keep the commandments, the right ordering of behaviour, life in sobriety, the regard of righteousness, not yielding to the passions, not being enslaved by pleasure-seeking, not to fall short in strength of character and in the virtues", as also in the eucharistic communion, which is symbolic participation in transcendent reality.

Faith and science: towards reconciliation

The reconciliation of the Christian faith to science (other religions do not experience this problem with the same acuteness or historical complications) requires a correction in this pseudomorphosis of religion — when theology tries to imitate science, and expounds faith in terms of propositional truths and intellectual dogmas. A certain modesty on the part of the Christian church about the nature and limits of its own pronouncements can be extremely wholesome. It is also necessary that one does not see faith and science as parallel approaches to propositional truth and knowledge. The church has to rediscover some modesty about the human word. It can be the carrier of the word of God — but only in the context of prayer and worship.

The Christian faith could also do well to inculcate a certain respect for modern science, in view of its record of disrespect in the past. But along with that, the church should also help people to arrive at a sober and sane understanding of both the limits and the possibilities of science and language. This can best be done by scientists and philosophers of science among the Christians through an internal dialogue within the church. There will have to be some repentance expressed on behalf of science, in relation to some of its arrogant exclusivism and tall claims in the past.

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[17]*Loc. cit.*

The reconciliation between modern science and the western Christian church must first take place *within* the church — that is, between practitioners of science and technology who are Christians, and the leadership of the church, especially the theological and spiritual leadership. In this context one is grateful for the work of the WCC in bringing together theologians and scientists (both Christian and non-Christian) for discussion of common problems. Paul Abrecht deserves the highest encomia for this achievement, and it is the present writer's hope that he will continue to serve the dialogue between science and faith even after his retirement from the World Council of Churches.

Appendix: Remarks Concerning the Above Paper

K.V. Laurikainen

Point A

Space and time are not objective but the four-dimensional space-time *is objective* (invariant — independent of the observer). Perhaps one could delete the sentence: "Even the questioning..." and change the next sentence a little.

Point B

The Newtonian mechanics breaks down:

— for very small masses (energies, momenta), and

— for very high velocities (near the speed of light).

The special theories of relativity and quantum mechanics are based on new axioms, but it is true that they can be said to be generalizations of Newtonian mechanics; in the specific case of big masses, or of small velocities, these new theories are reduced to Newtonian mechanics. (More exactly, in these cases they contain a structure isomorphic with Newtonian mechanics.)

Point C

Here we come to the most essential questions. I would not like to emphasize the micro-levels when speaking of statistical causality. The most essential impact for a change of the conception of causality has come from microphysics, but statistical causality should be understood as a general conception valid in all fields of knowledge. It is a new idea of the "order in the world". What we have learned in microphysics has been the strongest motivation for this change, but why should we use different conceptions of causality at micro- and macro-levels? The essential point is that *only statistical mean values can be described by laws, not individual events.* Thus statistical causality contains both an element of causality and a certain "freedom" or "irrationality"; individual events are "randomly" distributed around the mean case, and this "scatter" of individual events does not have any rational explanation, in principle.

It is true that the macro-level is always produced by an enormous number of micro-events, and therefore we get an impression of a deterministic world when investigating the macro-level.

Bohr, Pauli and Heisenberg represented, in fact, three personal variants of the "Copenhagen interpretation" with respect to the basic philosophy. All of them emphasize that it is necessary to generalize the conception of causality, and this must involve *all fields of human knowledge*, not only atomic physics. This generalization they describe, however, in different ways.

For Bohr, complementarity is the generalized conception of causality. (Complementarity is, in quantum mechanics, a very general idea: the dualism of waves and particles is only a first step in developing this idea.) Bohr's way of describing the change in the concept of causality remains, however, very abstract, and many people find his thinking to be unclear.

Pauli has, instead, emphasized the concept of statistical causality as a generalized causality, for instance in his editorial in *Dialectics*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4, 1948. For him this was a very deep change (revolution) in science in general, not only in atomic physics.

For Heisenberg, his uncertainty principle was most important. It gives an exact limit for the applicability of classical causal laws in physics. What the role of uncertainty relations is in other fields than physics is, however, unclear; we come here to questions of reductionism.

I came to the same conclusion as Pauli, and in my Finnish books I have described the new view with the aid of statistical causality. Later I found that Pauli describes the situation in a very similar way. In the Niels Bohr Archive I also found Fock's remarks to Bohr in 1957, and this seems to have had a certain influence on Bohr's description of the situation. I think it is good to know this background.

Most western philosophers consider the philosophical remarks of the Copenhagen school as dubious. The enormous amount of work which has been done in order to make the philosophical basis of quantum mechanics more acceptable for philosophers has meant attempts to eliminate the "paradoxes" from quantum mechanics.

How Brave a New World?

Charles Birch

The advancement of the human lot has never come on the wings of inevitability. It has always depended upon human choice, that is to say on individual decisions and on public policy. The modern industrial world and the would-be industrial world has made its choice in terms of a human future dependent upon increased economic growth despite warnings of the ecologists. It has made another choice in that one in every two scientists and technologists is employed in perfecting the instruments of war. This tragic choice brands scientists and technologists as among the most destructive people in the world today. That is one reason for the public disenchantment with science lest, in Churchill's words, "the stone age return on the gleaming wings of science".

But there is no scientific or technological imperative that determines things must remain that way. Despite appearances we are not in the grasp of a technological determinism that closes our options for ever. A new way is possible. But that will depend upon a new sort of science and technology and a new sort of human commitment. Such a venture will be full of risks. A critical question is how brave can we be as we begin to design a new sort of world and how brave can we be in casting off our religious prejudices that belong to another age in order to remould them for the new world?

Science and technology for a sustainable society

Many of us believe that the world as at present organized, politically, socially and economically is not conducive to the long-term survival of humanity nor the short-term survival of particular regions. The reasons have to do with the impossibility theorem, which says that if all the world's people used resources and polluted the environment at the rate of the developed world, we would run out of resources and destroy the life-support systems of the planet within the foreseeable future. This is the argument of the limits to growth. The word limits refers to growth in numbers of people, economic growth in material goods and growth in deterioration of the environment. The argument of limits to growth is that a world based on the unlimited growth in the use of resources has a limited life. Hence the argument for zero population growth and zero growth in the production and consumption of material goods.

The argument is familiar to most of us. When first propounded, it sent shock waves through both the rich world and the poor world. The rich world saw its survival as dependent upon economic growth in the production and consumption of material goods. The poor world saw its survival as dependent upon economic growth even to keep the poor alive. "The rich world has had its turn, now it's our

turn," said the poor world. So there was great opposition all round to the so-called steady-state society or the equilibrium society. And we need hardly be surprised. There is little that all the nations agree upon. But there is one policy that is the same for all. Without exception all nations want increased economic growth.

In the conference in Bucharest in 1974, called by the World Council of Churches to discuss the role of science and technology in the future, I was in a working group on limits to growth. The third world delegates resisted the idea. Jørgen Randers (an author of *The Limits to Growth*[1]) and I had to write the report of our group. I recall Randers saying that part of our trouble was that all our expressions were negative: limits, equilibrium, steady state and so on. Let's get a positive phrase! And he suggested "science and technology for a sustainable society", i.e. a society that could be sustained ecologically indefinitely. In other words the sustainable society is one which does not destroy the soil in which it grows. It sustains the sources of life.

The substantialist prejudice

The substantialist prejudice is to suppose that the knowledge we need to understand the problems of the world is parcelled up into packages which are like substances and which we call chemistry, biology, economics, politics and so on. The title of Arthur Koestler's last book is *Bricks to Babel*. In it he wrote: "We seem to be compelled to shape facts and data as we know them into hard bricks and stick them together with the slime of our theories and beliefs." The result — a tower of Babel. Our knowledge lacks any fundamental unity. It is as though we build a great cathedral, laying each stone and brick next to one another with great attention to detail but without any sense of the whole cathedral, let alone its purpose. This way of thinking, which is called substance thinking, loses the unity which no fragment can grasp.

It follows that the experts must always be wrong. They have a tunnel vision rather than a panoramic outlook. A French prime minister is reported to have said that there are three common ways for a man to ruin his career: chasing women, gambling, and trusting experts. Of these, he said, chasing women is the most pleasant, and gambling is the quickest, but trusting experts is the most certain.

Specialization is necessary but not sufficient. As a method of operating, we no doubt still need the disciplines. But we need to do something about the training of experts in these disciplines. We need new sorts of experts. They are people who can cross boundaries. There is a difference between an expert and a thinker. A thinker sets no boundaries to his thinking. That is why the philosopher Heidegger said "science doesn't think". The scientist is not taught to think across boundaries. Those that try are politely labelled dilettantes or less politely nuts.

I have called the dominant model of knowledge the substance or mechanical model. The alternative I call the ecological model because it emphasizes relationships rather than substances. The dominant model reflects substance thinking.

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[1]Donella H. Meadows et al., eds, New York, Universe, 1972.

The ecological model reflects event thinking. In substance thinking an entity is what it is in relative independence of other entities. Like the petrol that drives the motor car, it has only external relations. But plants and animals and humans and other entities are not commodities. To understand what they are, you have to understand them in terms of relationships — in particular, internal relationships. They are what they are by virtue of their internal relationships. We understand the meaning of that best in ourselves. I am what I am by virtue of my internal relationships or feelings to other people and to God. I am not the same person today as yesterday. My internal relationships change me. Event thinking or relational thinking is making its way in physics before biology. Physics has discovered the impossibility of thinking deeply about fundamental physics in terms of particles regarded as substances. For as David Bohm says: "There are no particles." Biology, and along with it environmental science, has a long way to go in that direction. The rules of substances, i.e. mechanics, are not the only rules that govern the activities of organisms.

A man made some counterfeit $18 notes. He took them to a shop and asked for change. Which do you prefer, said the shopkeeper, three sixes or two nines? If we work with a counterfeit model of nature, we get counterfeit answers all along the line.

By opting for the substantialist prejudice the whole of society operates out of a profound error that is destroying much that is worthwhile in ourselves and in the world.

Experts are always wrong. The best informed are often the most confused. That is why George Bernard Shaw, in the *Doctor's Dilemma*, said: "The professions are all a conspiracy against the laity." The effects are far-reaching. The crisis in knowledge has helped plunge the world into its present global crisis of management. The Club of Rome talks about the "world problematique", by which it means to convey the idea that we are confronted with a lot of problems simultaneously and that we cannot solve any one of them one at a time. All are interconnected.

For hundreds of years we could grow in each part of the production system: more food, more petroleum, more tractors, etc. all separately pursued. But in this present transition period the goals have become intertwined and interdependent. Concerned with pollution we design motor cars that use more petrol. We raise chimney stacks in England and produce acid rain in Europe. Consider the complex relations between advances in hygiene, medicine, population growth and food shortages. Even technology, crime and freedom are intertwined. No important question can be answered at the level it is asked. You cannot do only one thing. Yet the way of the world has been to go to experts. We get partial answers that do not fit together. I can tell you how to control inflation, says the economist, but I cannot help you with unemployment. Economists tend to say it's a case of jobs or environment, when actually if you don't look after the environment, there will be no jobs. My friend Paul Ehrlich says economists are the most dangerous of the experts because they are listened to. Experts are fond of regarding life as a zero-sum game. If you gain something here then you have to lose it there. But what about the possible symbiosis of desirable goals; environment and jobs? Or do we have to forever live with a system of trade-offs?

Our task is to find a new approach to the world problematique in which we can think synoptically about economics, politics, science, technology, industry, ethics and faith in an ecological model that encompasses all life. The ecological model has as its goal an ecologically sustainable and socially just global society. Or to put it more simply, healthy people with healthy relations to a healthy environment. When the experts say it cannot be done, I remind myself of the story of Leo Szilard, the Hungarian polymath who helped to make the first nuclear chain reaction in Chicago. When Szilard appealed for research grants, he always proposed to do experiments that he had in fact already done, so that he could use the money for research whose outcome he could not predict. The system worked perfectly until one year his application was rejected on the grounds that the proposed experiment was impossible.

The sort of science and technology we choose will very much depend upon our basic attitudes to the future, both to what is known and what is unknown.

Attitudes to the unknown

What do we really know about the future? "Precious little," says economist Kenneth Boulding, "but that little is precious." Various attitudes to the unknown are captured in the century-old story of the lady or the tiger.

The young man could open either of two doors. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, which would immediately tear him to pieces. But if he opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects. So I leave it to you, which door to open?

The first man refused to take the chance. He lived safe and died chaste.

The second man hired risk assessment consultants. He collected all the available data on lady and tiger populations. He brought in sophisticated technology to listen for growling and detect the faintest whiff of perfume. He completed checklists. He developed a utility function and assessed his risk averseness. Finally, sensing that in a few more years he would be in no condition to enjoy the lady anyway, he opened the optimal door. And was eaten by a low probability tiger.

The third man took a course in tiger taming. He opened a door at random and was eaten by the lady.

To interpret this story, we respond to the unknown by trying to retreat from it, by trying to comprehend it or by trying to control it. To retreat from the future is the Arcadian approach. It is directed backwards to a mythical golden age, to a state of innocence in a pastoral world where peace of mind is not threatened, intellectual aspiration is not called for and virtue is not at risk. Arcadia is a world without strife, without ambition and without material accomplishment. This approach is evident in longings for a return to a simpler risk-free life that never was. But a world without science and technology is not a choice possible for us. Four billion people cannot survive without some form of science and technology. We can choose between technologies, but apart from that there is no option open to us. It is the case of Henry Ford's offer to prospective buyers of the first Ford motor car: "You can have any colour you like as long as it's black."

A second approach is to attempt to comprehend the future, and these days that means a risk/benefit analysis. Measure the probabilities and the trade-offs, calculate the social risk/benefit ratio and the common good will be defined. But it isn't. A risk/benefit analysis was made of a project to remove crossing lights in front of an old folks' home. The analysis resulted in the crossing lights being removed. What value are old people in old folks' homes? The choices of risk assessment methods are themselves biased by underlying cultural assumptions or those of the analyst. You need only consider the controversy following the well-known Rasmussen report on risk/benefit analysis of nuclear reactors. The assessment, management and adjustment of risk in industry is estimated to cost in the region of $300 billion in the US each year. That is about 15 percent of the GNP. The underlying question is how safe is safe enough, and that involves subjective judgments which vary with the analyst. And we have to remember that we can always be eaten by a low probability tiger.

A third approach is to control the future. This is the approach of the tiger-tamer. Historically I suppose it could be said to be represented by the utopian vision that began to be taken seriously from the seventeenth century onwards. One of the writers at the time was a man called Foigny, who like Francis Bacon placed his utopia on an island in the southern seas which he called Terra Australe and whose inhabitants he called Australians! In utopia man creates the world anew and improves it through his own exertions. He begins as a tenant or lodger in the world and ends up as its landlord. And as his environment improves, so, it alleges, will he. Men look forward, never backward and seldom upward.

This is the dominant tradition of professional engineers, scientists and technologists in general. It serves us well up to a point. But as some engineers have been the first to point out, it has met its match and more in the complex unmanageable world it is called upon to address. There is, despite its benefits, one long recognized weakness in utopian speculation: the inadequacies of man and the unlikelihood that he can live up to his own ambitions. It is for this reason that utopian thinking has led some of its modern practitioners such as Arthur Koestler and Carl Sagan to consider ways of "improving" man through genetic engineering or by some other sort of biological manipulation.

The utopian vision leads us to a paradox well put by historian and philosopher Karl Jaspers who wrote: "Today we are conscious of standing at a turning-point of history.... It is the Age of Technology.... We see ourselves in our technological ability as creators of salvation on earth without parallel — or we see ourselves as equally without parallel in our spiritual perplexity."

The man who trained himself to become a tiger-tamer finds himself confronted with a carnivorous lady. Why? The unknown is not a wrinkle to be ironed out of the social fabric. Not only do we face the inadequacy of human nature, but the unknown grows as we grow in knowledge and in our ability to control. Or to put it another way, there is a law that says, as knowledge increases arithmetically ignorance increases geometrically.

There is an alternative to these approaches to the future. It accepts the inevitability of incomplete knowledge, it accepts the challenge of the surprising world around us and it accepts the imperfections of human beings. The fundamental question is not how to calculate, control and even reduce risk, impor-

tant as that is in certain situations. It is how to increase our risk-taking abilities. How can we attain the intellectual and moral maturity to live fully and safely in a complex world? How brave is our new world?

Every creative step forward in human civilization has involved an increase in risk-taking. A.N. Whitehead said: "The major advances of civilization are processes that all but wreck the societies in which they occur. It is the business of the future to be dangerous." Advances in civilization were never throwbacks to some garden of Eden with a restoration of primitive innocence. They have always brought a maturer fulfilment of human life. With every new advance into life there is a cost. Every new liberation in technology, politics, education or sex, produces new forms of enslavement. The price paid for neolithic culture and for urban civilization was enormous. So too was the price paid for the agricultural revolution with soil erosion and the like, and later the Industrial Revolution with its dark satanic mills. In each case the new brought new creative possibilities and new hopes and new experiences, but also new possibilities of evil and suffering that did not exist before.

Willingness to take risks is a condition of biological progress. Life could have stayed in the slime of a shallow tropical sea where it probably originated. It didn't. It ventured up rivers, onto dry land, into the air. It conquered every habitat on earth, from the deepest depths of the oceans to the highest peaks of the mountains, from pole to equator. One could imagine the first marsupials arriving on this continent saying to themselves — this particular spot is the place for us. No, they ventured forth to every corner of the continent diversifying as they went until Australia found itself with the world's greatest array of marsupials.

How did life increase its risk-taking abilities? By mutating. That is to say by changing to meet the new future. Even that first molecule of DNA in the ancient sea could have stayed the same, just replicating itself for ever. But it didn't. It had built into itself the capacity for change. That is the basis of evolution as we understand it today.

The question for us is: Do we have the capacity for change that will enable us to increase our capacity for living in the future? And for humanity we mean not primarily changing our biology but changing our culture, our politics, our economics, our science and our technology. The sustainable and just global society of the future will be full of risks. But they won't be foolhardy risks that could lead to our extinction, such as was the fate of the dinosaur. To think that the future is simply a continuation of present trends is to have the dinosaur mentality. That future is one of certain extinction.

The question I put to myself is this. Had I stood back at the edge of history, say at the brink of the Industrial Revolution, how would I with hindsight have steered its course? Would I have feared the risks involved in forging ahead? How could I have accepted the challenge and taken the increased risks whilst at the same time refusing to accept the enormous cost that history claimed. That is the question I now ask of myself at this turning point of history. Perhaps we could have skipped some of it as suggested in a cartoon depicting a group of tribesmen way back who were consulting the future together. The caption of the cartoon read: "So by a vote of 8 to 2 we have decided to skip the Industrial Revolution and go right into the electronic age." A nice idea but not a possible one.

What are the cultural mutations we would have to make to ensure a future on this earth which is sustainable and which promotes a full life?

Features of a science and technology for a sustainable global society

• A science and technology for a sustainable global society will be informed by an ecological model of organisms and institutions and their inter-relations, as opposed to the exclusively mechanical model which is the dominant model of science and technology today. The emphasis will be on relationships, that is to say on event thinking rather than on substance thinking.

• It will be less manipulative of nature and more in harmony with nature. Medicine will emphasize preventive medicine in contrast to the present emphasis on curative and manipulative medicine. Industry will be more concerned with preventing poisons from getting into the air and water than with trying to clean up after the damage is done. All manipulation that is needed will be done in the context of respectful attention to the strategies of life and ecological interdependencies. Technology will opt for soft landings, not hard landings, i.e. superstar technology will give place to the so-called softer options of appropriate technology. Not everything that can be done will be done. Our faith in technology will be tempered. As Wassily Leontief, the economist, said: "It's the people who don't know anthing who think that everything is possible!"

• It will write the person and all living creatures into the equation in a way that most risk/benefit analysis ignores.

• It will emphasize the intrinsic value of all life. Humanity can be neither saved nor understood alone. The dominant model regards the world as a factory. Even the conservation movement lacks an adequate alternative. Its dominant message is: Look after nature because nature looks after us. Its values are the instrumental values of nature. There is the silo value of nature as a store house of food. There is the laboratory value of nature for scientific work. There is the gymnastic value of nature for recreation, and there is the cathedral value of nature for reverie and meditation. All are instrumental values. What will save the whales if economics declares that the greatest instrumental (economic) value of whaling will be achieved by cropping all the whales now instead of working for a sustainable yield for the indefinite future? Nothing will save the whales then, unless we attribute to whales intrinsic value in themselves and to God. What could give a whale intrinsic value? Surely only feelings give intrinsic value. The whale is not simply an object, it is a subject too. It too has experiences which are presumably of value to itself and to God. If a man is worth many sparrows, then a sparrow's worth is more than zero.

The recognition that every animal is an end in itself explodes the assumptions of traditional ethics. The general principle that follows is that we should respect every creature for its intrinsic worth as well as for its instrumental value. That is a task ethics has hardly begun to think about. It becomes a practical issue when you live in a country where every elephant uses land and crops that could produce food for humans who are without it. It is a mistake to suppose that all life is of equal intrinsic value. That does not help at all. We have to work out some sort of hierarchy of value which will be related to the capacity for richness of experience.

• It will measure life in terms of richness of experience. The focus of the dominant model is on possession and consumption of goods and services. If we don't search our conscience and realize that there is more to life than money, minerals and missiles, we run the risk of offering ourselves for destruction as well as helping to destroy the world. Richness of experience relates to people not only as consumers but as producers as well.

• It will be accessible to non-specialists, participatory, non-elitist. One of the authors of *Limits to Growth*, when asked ten years later how he would have changed the book were he to write it now, replied: "We didn't tell the people that the power to change things rests with them." But that assumes that people will take the trouble to understand the issues. The temptation we face when we recognize the urgency of issues is to become activists in an immediate way. I feel about them much as I feel about experts. The problem is that activists are too likely to assume what the problem is and then get an expert to tell them how to solve it. As science and technology become more participatory, there will be a growing awareness that whole classes of science and technology may be incompatible with democratic forms of government, such, for example, as nuclear power, certain forms of data processing and some forms of genetic engineering aimed at positive eugenics as distinct from negative eugenics.

• It will promote community in contrast to breaking up community, such as happened during the Green Revolution in the developing world and as is happening now in the so-called development in the frontier regions of Brazil. How can communities be saved? By empowering ordinary people to take their own development into their own hands. This is called self-reliance. "The meek shall inherit the earth." That's what the graffiti writer put on the wall. Someone wrote beneath: "If that's all right with the rest of you." Then someone added a third line: "The meek won't want it!"

• It will emphasize the possible symbiosis of desirable goals: jobs and environment, deflation and employment, ecological sustainability and social justice.

• It will put an emphasis on transcending. Individuals are constituted by their relations to others, but they transcend the others to which they are related. To be alive is to rise above the present experience of life. Life is novelty. A healthy society is one whose members are encouraged to transcend the given pattern, not to conform to it.

• It will be planetary rather than local and national. Science and technology in the service of national goals alone will not be conducive to a sustainable global society. It must transcend national boundaries. In his famous talk at the MIT "strike" in 1969, George Wald recognized that the problems were global, requiring global solutions. "The thought that we are in competition with the Russians and the Chinese is all a mistake and trivial.... We are one species with one world to win."

• It will be non-violent. Swords will literally be beaten into ploughshares. The one million dollars spent every minute on military activities and weapons will be seen to be the suicide that it is. Scientists and technologists will be ashamed that one in every two of its practitioners is now engaged in destructive activities. Defence there no doubt will be, but not in terms of the massive overkill that the present nuclear arms race presents.

When a new kind of humanity and a new kind of culture is emerging, it is not likely that the old humanity will willingly disinherit itself. It will try to make a new life out of a dying culture through desperate simplification. It will insist on hearing the old records played and replayed. The return to simple basics is a return to the worn out ways of the past. The Reagans and the Thatchers are not the wave of the future. They are part of our economic and political malaise. Theirs is a rear vision mirror of the world. Be it in politics, economics, religion or morality, the present plea to return to old-fashioned basics is a call to reinforce the status quo and prevent change. There is a population appeal in the plea for simple basics. But remember the saying of H.L. Mencken: "For every human problem there is a solution that is simple, neat and wrong"!

The two hardest tasks for humanity are, firstly, the international political task of creating a just, participatory and sustainable society: and, secondly, the task of reforming religion so that it will be a major influence in that new world. It is well to remember that war and superstition are man's peculiar evils. It is easy to give up and say, let's become spectators. Why not despair? Is not the history of culture just a successive opening of doors in Bluebeard's Castle? Is there anything else going on? Is there any ground for hope? These are real questions.

The future does not have to continue the direction of the past. We may not be able to predict the future, but we can invent it. The future is open-ended. Why believe that the future is open? I believe the future is open because I believe in God. I do not believe that the resources of God have yet been exhausted. I do believe there are values that have not yet visited this planet that are waiting to be appropriated. We do not need to go on as we are now. Repentance *is* possible. God gives us surprising new opportunities if we would only see them. That our lives are in God and that God is in us does not mean that God will look after it all and all will be well. There could be a nuclear holocaust. God won't stop that. But the recognition of the disorder and tragedy we have created can lead us to a repentance within individuals and within groups to allow grace to work among us.

We need in a very special way to have hope and faith and love. Reinhold Niebuhr put it this way: "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness."

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Some WCC books on Church and Society

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

The challenge of nuclear disarmament. The complete record of a public hearing on nuclear weapons and disarmament, organized by the WCC, Amsterdam 1981. Edited by Paul Abrecht and Ninan Koshy.
Paperback, 404 pp., Sfr.27.50, US$13.95, £8.95.

FACING UP TO NUCLEAR POWER

A contribution to the debate on the risks and potentialities of the large-scale use of nuclear energy. Edited by Paul Abrecht and John Francis.
Paperback, 256 pp., Sfr.5.90, US$2.95, £1.95.

FAITH AND SCIENCE IN AN UNJUST WORLD

Report of the WCC conference on "Faith, Science and the Future", MIT, Cambridge, USA, 1979. Edited by Paul Abrecht and Roger Shinn.
Vol. I: Plenary Presentations. Paperback, 408 pp., Sfr.19.90, US$9.95, £6.50.
Vol. II: Reports and Recommendations. Paperback, 224 pp., Sfr.9.90, US$4.95, £2.95.
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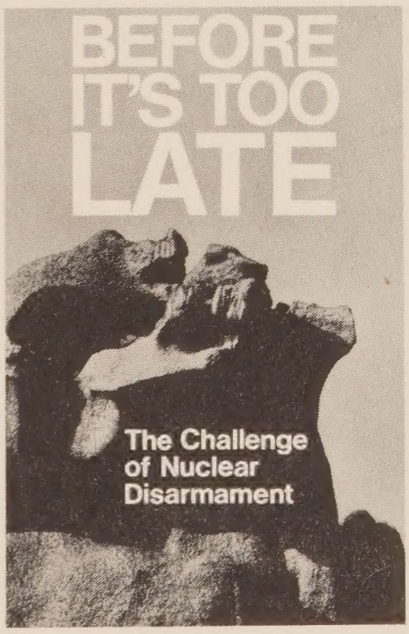
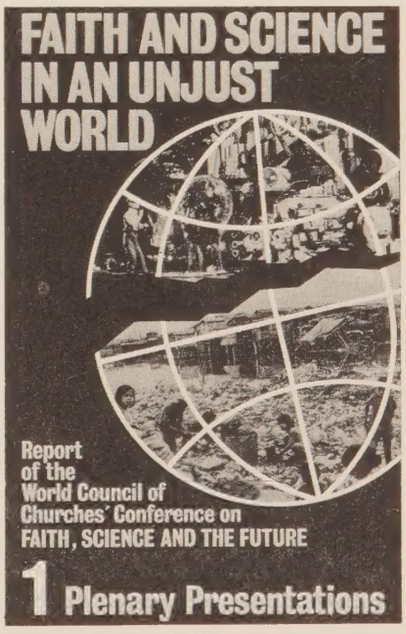
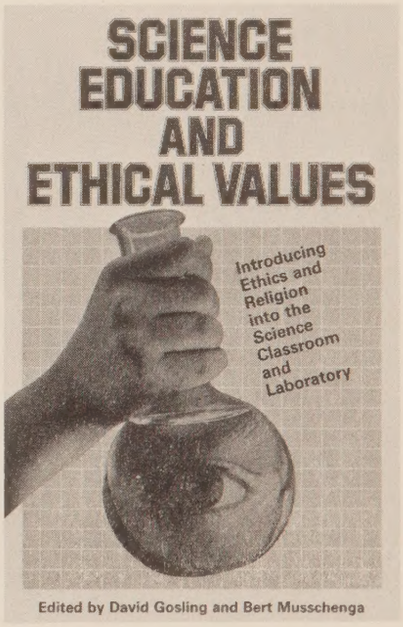






SCIENCE EDUCATION AND ETHICAL VALUES

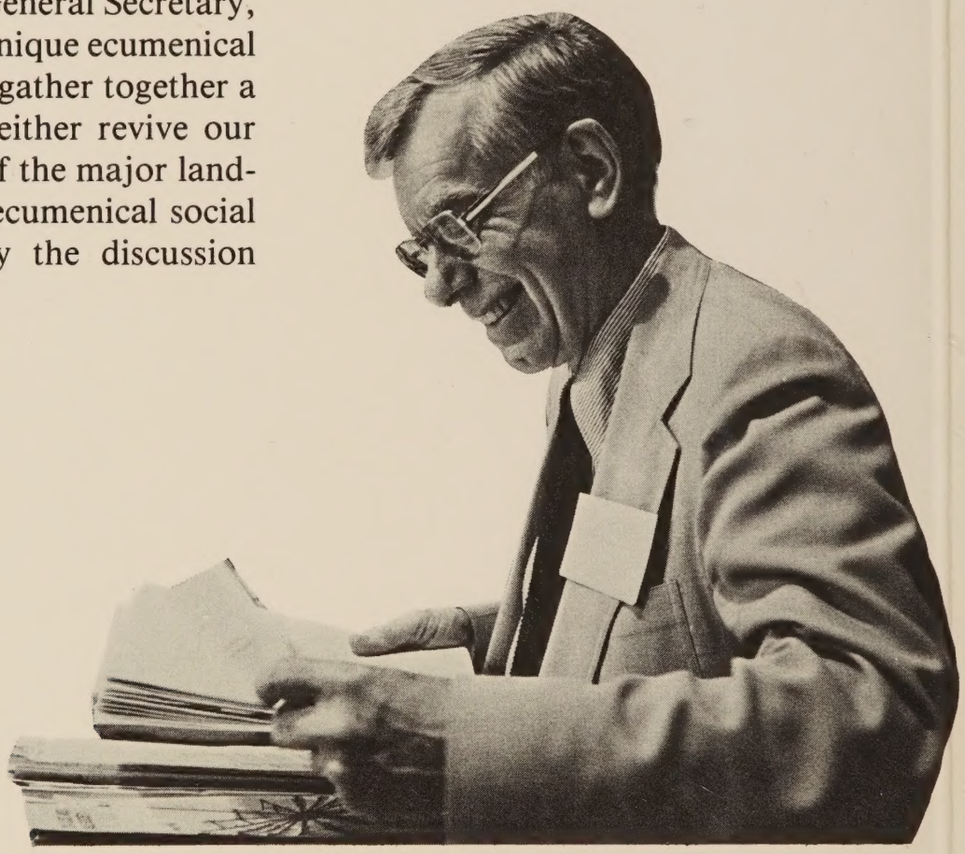
Introducing Ethics and Religion into the Science Classroom and Laboratory. Edited by David Gosling and Bert Musschenga.
Paperback, 128 pp., approx. Sfr.13.90, US$6.25, £4.75.

WCC PUBLICATIONS P.O. Box 66, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

This special issue of *The Ecumenical Review* is a *Festschrift* for Paul Abrecht, director of the World Council of Churches' Sub-unit on Church and Society from 1948-1983. To many people around the world, Dr Abrecht personified the work of the WCC in the area of church and society.

The essays in this collection have been contributed by colleagues and friends who have worked with Dr Abrecht over this period. The first part provides insights into the history of the WCC and its work on church and society, and the second part takes up specific concerns of the World Council and of theological ethics. It moves from regional studies into questions of economics and ethics, then into still more general issues of theology and ethics.

As Dr Philip Potter, WCC General Secretary, says: "The best tribute to the unique ecumenical ministry of Paul Abrecht is to gather together a wide variety of essays which either revive our ecumenical memory of some of the major landmarks in the development of ecumenical social thought and action, or carry the discussion further."



"The churches have practically unlimited opportunities to contribute their insights into the spiritual and moral problems of people and society in the midst of economic change, insights which cannot be expected from any other group in society."

Paul Abrecht in
"The Churches and Rapid Social Change," 1961